

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

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Chaos in Iraq

Writing in *The Independent* (15 September 2005) Robert Fisk asks a leading question, 'Why is it that we and America wish civil war in Iraq?' The 'we' is the British state. A little history of colonial wars provides a few ready answers: divide and rule; an excuse to prolong the military occupation; deflect the violence away from the occupation armies; isolate and target the main source of resistance; get others to do the fighting for you etc. Entangled in an escalating war the US and British governments are seeking to reduce and focus their military forces in Iraq, but in doing so threaten to ignite a wider conflagration. The Iraqi people's suffering continues; their death rate accelerates. **TREVOR RAYNE** reports.

On 14 September a suicide bomber lured labourers in a Shia part of Baghdad with the prospect of jobs. As they gathered around his van it detonated, killing 114 people. There were no Iraqi or occupation forces in the vicinity. The attack was claimed by the Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, leader of al-Qaida in Iraq, as 'revenge for the Sunni people of Tal Afar'. The statement declared war on the Shias. The victims of the suicide bomb had not attacked Tal Afar, a city close to the Syrian border; they had not joined and were not joining the interim government's forces. The victims were poor Iraqi workers seeking an income from work. Their slaughter was sec-

tarian and serves the interests of the occupying powers.

Several Iraqi resistance groups issued their own joint statement in response to the al-Qaida in Iraq claim. They said, 'the aim of the Iraqi Resistance and their military strikes will be directed at the occupiers and collaborators and nobody else, and the call for attacking the Shi'ites in general is nothing but a fire that will burn all Iraqis, Sunnis and Shi'ites'. Sheikh Jawad al-Kalisi, imam of Baghdad's al-Kazemiya mosque, told the French newspaper *Le Monde* that al-Zarqawi was killed at the start of the invasion of Iraq and that he 'is a ploy used by the Americans, an excuse to continue

the occupation'. What the imperialists fear is united Iraqi resistance; their military capacity could not cope with Shia and Sunni populations mobilised across Iraq to demand the removal of the invaders.

Iraq Body Count estimated that from 20 March 2003 until July 2005 average daily civilian deaths due to the conflict was 34, with the occupation forces responsible for 98.5% of these. The death rate in the second year of the conflict was twice that of the first year. Women and children constitute a fifth of the dead. One in 200 is less than two years old.

continued on page 6



TERRORISING COMMUNITIES

Shoot-to-kill in London

The execution of Jean Charles de Menezes in Stockwell tube station on 22 July was a watershed for the Labour government's array of anti-terrorist measures in the wake of the 7 July bombings. The government pretends to be genuinely combating the terrorist threat to Britain: in fact, its every move is based on a wealth of experience of terrorising communities across the world. Bloody war is being waged abroad and civil liberties systematically withdrawn here in Britain. Prime Minister Blair's warning that 'the rules of the game are changing' encompasses indefinite detention in Guantanamo Bay; the deportation of suspects to countries that practise torture; the admission of evidence

extracted by torture; arbitrary detention; restrictions on the right to a fair trial, to the freedoms of conscience, expression and association. What were once inalienable human rights can now be suspended on the whim of a minister or even a police officer. The death of de Menezes lifted the lid on Labour's agenda.

The killing
De Menezes, a young Brazilian, left his Tulse Hill flat in south London on the morning of Friday 22 July, to travel to north London to meet a friend. He caught a bus to Stockwell tube station and made his way to the platform. He was followed by a squad of armed undercover police who pushed him to the ground as he boarded the train, restrained him and then pumped seven bullets into his brain and one into his shoulder in a carriage full of terrified passengers.

Apparently his block of flats was placed under surveillance after the address was discovered in one of the rucksack bombs which failed to explode the previous day. According to the press, the identification of de Menezes as a suspect was bizarrely uncertain as the surveillance officer was 'relieving himself' at the time he left the flat. What is clear is that he was targeted as a suspect and followed.

Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Ian Blair issued a statement that afternoon claiming the shooting was 'directly linked' to ongoing anti-terrorist investigations. The British gutter press were thrilled: 'Shoot them all!' read one headline.

The cover-up

As it soon became clear that Menezes had no connection with terror bombings whatsoever, a damage limitation operation became necessary. Politicians from Jack Straw to Charles Clarke to Tony Blair queued up to get the message across: that while the

killing was deeply regrettable, the threat is so great that some innocent people may need to be sacrificed for the greater good.

On Saturday 22 July, the Met, forced to issue a statement confirming that de Menezes was not connected with terrorism, began the dirty tricks and counter-information. Menezes, they stated, was followed by surveillance officers 'in the Stockwell area' and 'his clothing and behaviour added to their suspicions'. In fact, Tulse Hill is several miles from Stockwell: de Menezes could have been stopped before reaching the tube. The press was filled with graphic descriptions of how he 'bolted down the escalator' and 'leapt over the barriers' and was wearing 'a chunky top' or 'unseasonal clothing' which could have 'concealed a bomb'. This was not true: de Menezes wore a T-shirt and denim jacket, used a travel card, and walked through the ticket barrier.

Then the Home Office began a

continued on page 2

INSIDE

WELCOME... p2

TERRORISING

COMMUNITIES
Chaos in Iraq p1/6

Shoot-to-kill in London p1/2

Labour's new anti-terrorism

laws p3

Racist attacks intensify p3

IRELAND

Loyalism runs riot p7

HURRICANE

The exposure of a rotten,
racist state p8/9

WORLD FESTIVAL

World Festival of Youth and
Students in Venezuela p10

CUBA VIVE

The Battle of Ideas p11

REVIEW

Ireland, imperialism and

national revolution p12

PALESTINE

Gaza withdrawal
Zionists expand West Bank
settlements p16

+ news, reviews, prisoners
fightback, round-up and letters

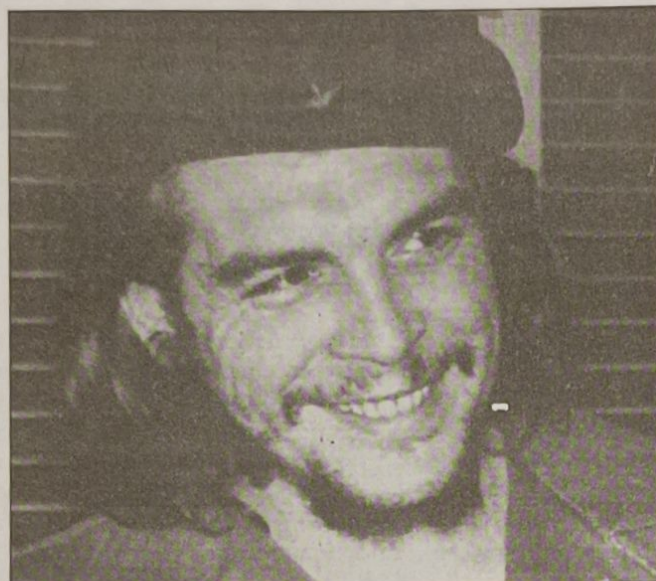
Welcome...

'The greatest of the imperial powers is feeling in its own bowels the bleeding inflicted by a poor, backward country: its fabulous economy is strained by the war effort. Killing has ceased to be the most comfortable business for the monopolies' (Che Guevara - 'create two, three, many Vietnams', message to the Tricontinental, April 1967)

38 years ago on 8 and 9 October 1967, revolutionary communist Ernesto 'Che' Guevara was captured and executed in Bolivia where he was preparing a Latin-American anti-imperialist guerrilla front, following his call to 'create two, three, many Vietnams'. His message to the Tricontinental refers to the courageous struggle of the Vietnamese people against US imperialism. Today the poor inflicting bleeding on the US are the Iraqis (see pages 1 and 6).

Once again the US is bleeding in its bowels, but it is not just the monopolies that are uncomfortable. Hurricane Katrina was a natural disaster turned into a human catastrophe by the anarchy and inefficiency of a capitalist system which puts profits before people every time. Katrina's thousands of dead are also victims of the US and Britain's barbaric 'war on terrorism' (see page 8/9). There is no blood price the imperialists will not pay in the interests of their profit, as long as the system itself is not threatened by political crisis.

The Katrina catastrophe highlighted two things. Firstly, the deep-rooted racism, which is intrinsically linked to class oppression, that continues to dominate US society, whether or not it is articulated. Secondly, the steady erosion of investment into social infrastructure and welfare provision. These realities are the constant backdrop of daily life for the poor in rich capitalist countries, but they are usually experienced as a form of individual suffering. With the sheer scale of the Katrina catastrophe, however, the suffering was so widespread and collective that it has created the potential for the re-emergence of class-consciousness and class struggle. That will be a struggle against poverty and against racism, in other words, against capitalism. The hurricane season is not over, and global warming threatens to intensify such phenomena. The poor will realise that they are the vast



majority of the world's population and rise up to take back the wealth they created with their sweat and blood. This happened in Cuba when Che joined Castro and the other Cuban revolutionaries in the 1950s (see page 11), and has now begun in Venezuela (see page 12).

Che Guevara said: 'We must definitely keep in mind that imperialism is a world system, the final stage of capitalism, and that it must be beaten in a great worldwide confrontation. The strategic objective of that struggle must be the destruction of imperialism.'

Wherever we are, we must fight against imperialism, contributing however we can. Never underestimate the contribution that every individual can make, especially in Britain where there are so few activists. It took 14 years to build a significant anti-war movement in the US against the brutal occupation of Vietnam and cost 3-4 million Vietnamese lives. We cannot wait that long to build a movement against the brutal occupation of Iraq.

This academic year new Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! student societies are being set up across the country. We have launched the Student Anti-Imperialist Network, a coalition of progressive anti-imperialist forces on campus. Now it is time to act. It is our duty to fight for the freedom of those whom our governments oppress. We must recognise that we benefit from the

exploitation of the oppressed majority, and renounce those privileges in the spirit of international proletarianism which Che Guevara practised so heroically. We must build a real anti-imperialist movement in this country. Not one that makes concessions to the Labour government, or refuses to fight anti-terrorism legislation (see page 3), not one that distances itself from criminalised migrant communities, not one that apologises for armed struggle, placing conditions on support for national liberation movements (see page 12). But one that means what it says: **Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!**

At the 16th World Festival of Youth and Students in revolutionary anti-imperialist Venezuela we met people from all over the planet engaged in struggles against imperialism, many of them risking their lives (see page 10). It is clear that the poor and oppressed of the world are fulfilling their duty to fight imperialism 'in a great worldwide confrontation'. That duty is not yet being fulfilled in the imperialist countries themselves, in the belly of the beast. Help us to build that movement in Britain. Let's answer Che Guevara's call and be part of that great worldwide confrontation with imperialism!

Please send your contributions, written and financial and your requests for information about our activities in your areas to:

FRFI, BCM Box 5909,
London WC1N 3XX

How to contact FRFI Student Societies by email:

- Glasgow University and Strathclyde University, Glasgow
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For more information on the first national conference of SAIN see page 14.

Shoot-to-kill in London

continued from page 1

crude attempt to vilify the victim, leaking stories that de Menezes was working illegally and had 'a forged stamp' in his passport - implying that he was less than innocent and that the police action was justified.

The lessons of British rule in Ireland

This catalogue of police and press lies has been the long rehearsed procedure of British imperialism wherever it has ruled - Malaya, Hong Kong, Aden, India, Kenya - indeed, every site of imperialist oppression, and nowhere more so than during its 35-year occupation of the north of Ireland. Since 1969, the Six Counties have been the proving ground for counter-insurgency, paramilitary policing and terrorising communities. The Prevention of Terrorism Act - introduced overnight by a Labour government in 1974 ostensibly as temporary emergency legislation, then cranked up annually thereafter - was primarily used to instil fear in Irish communities. Between 1974 and 1988, 97% of those arrested under the Act were released without charge. Only 1% were ever convicted of terrorism-related offences. Similarly, of the 700 people arrested under the Terrorism Act since 11 September 2001, half have been released without charge and only 17 convicted under the Act - with only three convictions related to 'Islamic' terrorism.

Muslim and Asian communities are now on the receiving end of the same treatment as the Irish. The British Transport Police announced on 1 August that 'we should not waste time searching old white ladies' - they would target specific ethnic minority groups for stop and search despite not being empowered to do so. In early September, Mayor Livingstone stated, as evidence of London's tolerance, that although 'faith hate crimes' had risen from 72 in the three weeks before the 7 July bombings to 257 in the three weeks after, they had now, reassuringly, returned to the previous level. What about race hate crimes? Look at the Institute of Race Relations website (www.irr.org.uk) for a real picture of racist attacks since the 7 July bombings.

Shoot-to-kill

Shoot-to-kill became a central, though denied, feature of British operations in Ireland from the mid-1970s onwards. In 1988 the Gibraltar Three were shot by the SAS who claimed their lives were threatened, although there were no guns or explosives in the vicinity; in 1982, seven people were shot in a matter of weeks by a special RUC anti-terrorist unit. During the trials of the RUC men involved, it emerged that the police had consistently lied under instruction from senior officers. The subsequent investigation, led by John Stalker of the Manchester police, was derailed when he was suspended on bogus corruption charges. Despite a later admission by the British government that there was *prima facie* evidence of conspiracy to pervert the course of justice, no criminal proceedings ensued.

Every time, lies are used to cover up murder, in Britain as in Ireland. The 1983 Police Complaints Authority found that the Met police was twice as likely as other police forces to open fire, including on the mentally ill. From the shootings of Steven Waldorf in 1983 to Harry Stanley in 1999, the police have lied about the real events and attempted to vilify the victims.

Sir Ian Blair has now admitted that a shoot-to-kill - or as he prefers to call it, a 'shoot-to-kill-to-protect' - policy exists in Britain. After the Waldorf shooting, the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) drew up guidelines for armed operations. In 2003 these guidelines were secretly



Armed, undercover and unaccountable

changed. The details have become public as a result of the de Menezes shooting: police are advised to shoot suspected suicide bombers in the head; no warning is required if the officer believes lives are threatened, and the police involved are not required to identify themselves. There is no evidence that Jean Charles de Menezes was given a warning and the armed police at Stockwell tube wore T-shirts and jeans.

The Ministry of Defence has admitted that the army provided technical assistance to the de Menezes surveillance operation. SAS soldiers are involved in the Special Reconnaissance Regiment formed to take part in anti-terrorist operations. Some sources claim that at least one of the armed men photographed outside Stockwell tube carried a specially-modified rifle favoured by the SAS and not issued to the SO19 Metropolitan Police firearms unit. Specialist counter-terrorist forces, with experience in the north of Ireland, have been drafted into London to help police. There are reports that 'Special firearms officers are being deployed on secondment to MI5, which is opening eight offices in cities including Glasgow, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds and Birmingham. The aim is to increase the surveillance of terrorist suspects and to penetrate radical networks with informants'.

Ken Jones, Chair of ACPO, maintains that while shooting terrorists is 'not a perfect science', it is intelligence led. There is little evidence of this. According to *The Observer* on 24 July, police are now trained to look for 'precursor activities' indicating imminent detonation of explosives, 'thought to include a look of agitation combined with a sense of disconnection from the world'. In August, Sir Ian Blair stated that since 7 July there have been 250 incidents where police have suspected a suicide bomber and considered shooting. He promised that more people could be shot on London's streets.

In contrast, Jean Charles de Menezes' family, supporters and solicitors have provided a beacon of truth, rejecting the blandishments of Labour ministers and the Metropolitan police and pointing out that nothing can justify the killing of an innocent man. Solicitor Gareth Peirce expressed astonishment that the phrase 'shoot-to-kill' is used as if it were legitimate. The Landless Rural Workers' Movement in Brazil stated: 'Mr de Menezes was assassinated in cold blood... a victim of intolerance' and called for the withdrawal of British troops from Iraq.

In the dark days to come, as the Labour government turns the screw and police marksmen take aim, remember this: British imperialism is on the offensive, treating the lives of working class and oppressed people as cheap. This attack creates an identity of interests - a common cause - between the working class and oppressed in Britain and internationally. This will be the basis on which we will build the movement to destroy imperialism. The opportunity must be seized.

Carol Brickley

website: www.rcgfrfi.easynet.co.uk
www.revolutionarycommunist.com

FRFI Fund Drive

FRFI reports on and supports the struggles of the oppressed resisting imperialism throughout the world. It is the only newspaper in Britain to expose the true nature of Labour imperialism. We work with all those who want to build a movement which represents the interests of the working class and oppressed. In this your support remains vital.

Please continue to dig deep.

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Labour's new anti-terrorism laws

On 15 September Home Secretary Charles Clarke published a new draft Terrorism Bill. Following the bomb attacks on London on 7 July Clarke and Tony Blair had announced their intention to bring forward planned legislation to extend powers to prosecute anyone guilty of 'preparation' for or 'incitement' to terrorism. The new Bill goes further, adding a new offence of 'glorifying terrorism' and extending the period of time for which terrorist suspects can be detained by police without charge from 14 days to three months. This is the effective reintroduction of internment, which was used against the Irish community in the 1970s.

The main measures in the new Bill are:

- 'preparation of terrorist acts' punishable by a maximum of life imprisonment;
- 'encouraging terrorism' by indirect incitement, carrying a prison sentence of up to seven years;
- 'glorifying terrorism' – punishable by up to five years imprisonment;
- providing or undertaking any kind of 'terrorist training' in any country, or knowingly attending a place where such training is taking place, punishable by up to 10 years' imprisonment;
- 'disseminating terrorist publications', applicable to anyone who 'gives sells or lends' such material, whether on paper or online – maximum sentence seven years;
- extension to list of banned groups from those 'directly involved in terrorism' to those who 'glorify, exalt or celebrate' terrorist acts. Hizb ut-Tahrir has already been named by Tony Blair as a target;
- continued bans on organisations which change their names
- extension of offence of criminal trespass to licensed civil nuclear sites;
- maximum period of detention of terrorist suspects extended from 14 days to up to three months.

'Glorifying terrorism'

The controversial proposed offence of 'glorifying terrorism' has already caused the government to do some bizarre legal gymnastics. Under the Bill, a criminal offence would be committed by anyone who 'publishes a statement or causes another to publish a statement on his behalf' which 'glorifies, exalts or celebrates the commission, preparation or instigation (whether in the past, future or generally) of acts of terrorism'.

However, no doubt following endless reminders that had the Terrorism Act 2000 been in force during an earlier period the ruling party in post-apartheid South Africa, the ANC, would have been banned in Britain, it will not be a crime to glorify an event that happened more than 20 years ago. Unless, that is, it features on a special list drawn up by the Home Secretary.

This hands the British Home Secretary unprecedented power to determine which historic struggles are considered acceptable and which cannot be spoken about in any terms other than condemnatory ones. Apparently bids have already been made to Clarke to 'permit' glorification of the French Revolution 1789 and the Easter Rising 1916, while he has indicated that the 2001 New York bombings and 2005 London ones will be certified in advance as never to be 'glorifiable'.

The government also plans to provide for 'terrorist supergrasses' to receive sentence discounts of up to 60% for providing evidence about their comrades and is exploring ways to use security service phone-tap evidence in trials.

'Opposition' to the Bill

The draft Bill was made available several weeks ahead of the publication of the full Bill to allow for consultation with opposition parties. While neither

the Conservative nor Liberal Democrat parties had so much as murmured against the earlier proposals, the new additions caused some controversy and will be the ground over which the parties 'bargain' in the coming weeks.

Tory shadow home secretary David Davis welcomed most of the measures but expressed concern about the plan for three months' detention without charge while the Liberal Democrats' Mark Oaten said that a 'major rethink' of the detention proposal and the glorification offence was needed to secure his party's backing. Anxious to make clear that they are not 'soft on terrorism', the Liberal Democrats insisted that their opposition was practical and based on concerns over how the 'glorification' offence would be drafted and interpreted by the courts. Regarding the extension of detention without charge, their spokesman argued instead for more police re-

sources to be made available to carry out investigations during the two-week period.



The plan to increase detention periods was denounced by Shami Chakrabarti, director of Liberty, as 'the very antithesis of justice'. This is the same Shami Chakrabarti who, the day after the London bombing, rushed to voice her 'unequivocal respect and admiration for the leadership shown by the Home Secretary [who] signalled effective but proportionate responses to the threat, which distinguish between the innocent and the

guilty'. So there is no likelihood that Liberty will actually mount any opposition. Liberty has also, bizarrely, campaigned for the admissibility of phone-tap evidence, on the grounds that this would mean the government could try those arrested on the basis of such 'intelligence', and would no longer need control orders or detention without trial.

Charles Clarke, whose apparent initial misgivings about extending the detention time limit as far as now proposed were widely 'leaked', is now certain to make some 'concessions' in relation to the most controversial aspects of the Bill. This will probably result in an extension to the current 14-day detention, but to a period that falls short of Clarke's opening gambit of three months. We should remember that for many years under the draconian anti-Irish PTA pre-charge detention was restricted to seven days, and even then the European Court of Human Rights considered that this was unlawfully long without judicial scrutiny.

The 'glorification' charge is highly likely to upset the House of Lords, who have lately been far better guarantors of human rights than their elected counterparts. However, the whole 'debate' is a cynical charade, designed to insure that the remaining proposals pass into law without discussion. These include the outlawing of 'indirect incitement' to terrorism, which could ultimately prove every bit as much an attack on the democratic right to free speech as the 'glorification' of terrorism currently subject to discussion.

Nicki Jameson

Racist attacks intensify

Racially-motivated attacks are a daily occurrence in Britain, and since the 7 July London bombings have increased sharply. In many areas, minority ethnic people, especially children and the elderly, live in constant fear, some too scared to answer the door. Stones, petrol and excrement have been put through windows and doors. Muslim women and Sikhs have had hijabs and turbans forcibly pulled off in public by vigilante racists.

The state does nothing to prevent this; indeed official racism creates a climate in which freelance racists thrive. Black and Asian people, especially youth, continue to be disproportionately targeted for stop-and-search. Asylum seekers continue to be detained, deported and are soon to be electronically tagged. Section 9 of the 2004 Asylum and Immigration Act, which forces asylum seekers into destitution by removing all benefits and threatening to take children into local authority care, has begun to be implemented in pilot areas. By October around 116 families (over 400 people) are expected to have had their benefits withdrawn. Hundreds more will suffer when the scheme becomes nationwide.

Unofficial racism

In Merseyside, racist attacks reported to monitoring groups increased fourfold to over 200 between 7 July and 18 August 2005, from 48 over the preceding six weeks. 170 attacks were reported to police between 7 July and 8 August compared with 91 over the same period last year (*Daily Post*, 30 August). Following the example of the British media and politicians in blaming Muslims, freelance racist thugs used the bombings as an excuse to step up what they had been doing

anyway. The police do nothing to protect the victims and most attacks have barely been reported. Since the 1999 MacPherson report into the murder of Stephen Lawrence, there have been 47 race-hate murders (Institute of Race Relations, 3 August 2005). Most people would struggle to name even one of the victims.

The racist murder on 11 July of 48-year-old Kamal Raza Butt, called 'Taliban' and punched by a mob of racist youth in Nottingham, was barely mentioned, let alone condemned. The only murder to receive any coverage was that on 30 July of 18-year-old Anthony Walker, who was attacked by a sadistic gang of thugs as he walked home with his girlfriend and cousin in Huyton, Liverpool, and left slumped on the ground with an axe in his head.

In Oldham, a mob of 100 racists hunted down and attacked three Asian children, two aged 11, in the grounds of Counthill School. Just four people were convicted for the assaults. One 14-year-old was kicked, punched, stamped on and hit with a wooden log until unconscious, and all were left too scared to go outside (*Asian News*, 26 August).

State racism

It is little wonder that racist attackers are not more vigorously pursued when British state officials such as police officers routinely commit racist attacks themselves, both in and out of uniform.

On 5 July six off-duty PCs and a WPC were arrested after they attacked and hospitalised five Asian men in Wimbledon, in a 'racially motivated brawl'. On 8 August, the Crown Prosecution Service announced that three Greater Manchester Police officers who were caught on CCTV in June 2003, repeatedly kicking a restrained Delbo King in the mouth and testicles, are not to be prosecuted due to 'insufficient evidence'.

Racist oppression against asylum-

seekers continues to intensify, often with tragic consequences. On 15 September, Manuel Bravo became the sixth known asylum detainee to die in custody in the last 12 months; he apparently committed suicide so his 13-year-old son Antonio wouldn't be deported. Manuel Bravo's parents had been killed and his sister raped in Angola. Manuel, his wife Lydia and their two sons, Antonio and Mellyu fled to Britain in 2001 and settled in Leeds. Earlier this year Lydia returned to Angola with Mellyu to care for relatives. A few months later Manuel learned that his wife had been arrested on arrival and that both his wife and son had disappeared.

Manuel and 13-year-old Antonio were arrested on 14 September and taken to Yarls Wood Removal Centre to be deported the next day. Now Antonio may be allowed to stay until he is 18, when he can apply for asylum.

The Home Office decided that from 1 August 2005 it would recommend deportations of Iraqi asylum seekers, as there was now a 'viable route of return'. By 16 August, hundreds of Iraqis were detained pending deportations on specially chartered, cost-saving flights.

Along with this decision went the withdrawal of 'hard case support' – accommodation, food and other basic essentials provided under section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 to would-be refugees whose applications have been refused, but who can't be deported because it's not safe to do so.

The number of asylum seekers qualifying for hard case support had increased sharply this year to over 6,700 between January and June 2005, from less than 2,000 for the whole of 2004. 69% of all recipients were fleeing Iraq and the British government, which is occupying their homeland, is now trying to starve them into returning.

Charles Chinweizu

FIGHT DEPORTATIONS!

Eucharia and Timeyi

Eucharia Jakpa and her six-year-old son Timeyi escaped from so-called 'safe' Nigeria after the disappearance of Eucharia's husband and daughter. When they arrived in Manchester they were refused the right to stay and were abandoned by their solicitor, making an appeal impossible. Eucharia realised that the only available option was to build a defence campaign. Local MP Sir Gerald Kaufman has refused to help the campaign or write to the Immigration Minister. Eucharia says, 'I know I can't win unless I fight.' Get involved in the campaign: email defend_eucharia@yahoo.com; phone 07904 880039, or send letters or donations to Defend Eucharia and Timeyi Campaign, c/o PO Box 20, Bridge 5 Mill, 22A Beswick Street, Manchester M4 7HR.

The Sukula family

The Sukulas are a family of eight who fled the Congo after violent attacks on them by soldiers; they are now living in Bolton. Their asylum appeal has been rejected and if Bolton Council decides to implement Section 9 of the 2004 Act, five of the family's six children – including a seven-month-old baby – will be placed in the care of social services and separated from their mother, father and 18-year-old sister.

In the Home Office letter to the Sukula family the British state's motives were made clear: a 'proportionate response to safeguard Britain's economic interests' – in other words these draconian measures are for the benefit of capitalism. For more information about the Sukula family's campaign to stay, visit www.sukula.org

Manchester FRFI

Gate Gourmet at Heathrow union undermines workers' solidarity

JOSEPH ESKOVITCH

'Recruit, train and security check drivers...Announce intention to trade union, provoking unofficial industrial action from staff. Dismiss current workforce. Replace with new staff.'

With brutal frankness, this leaked internal memo from Gate Gourmet, written long prior to the current dispute, sets out the cynical and callous reality of 21st century employment practice under capitalism.

Gate Gourmet provides 80,000 hot meals to British Airways daily. Previously part of British Airways before being sold off in 1997 during a frenzy of 'outsourcing', it was subsequently bought out in 2002 by US venture capitalist firm Texas Pacific, which has a reputation for acquiring failing companies and cutting costs through ruthlessly increasing the surplus value extracted from already low-paid workers.

On the morning of 10 August, Gate Gourmet workers assembled in the workplace cafeteria to discuss the company's decision to hire 120 new low-paid temporary workers from scab labour firm Blue Arrow. Whilst union representatives from the Transport & General Workers Union (T&GWU) were engaged in talks with Gate Gourmet managers over this development, it was suddenly announced to staff that they had three minutes to return to work or they would be fired. The workers refused to be intimidated by the threat and stood their ground. Almost immediately riot police and private security firms arrived, detaining the workers in the cafeteria, thus clearly revealing the pre-meditated nature of the provocation. No one was allowed to leave, not even pregnant women.

Those arriving for the late shift, on hearing this news, refused to enter work, assembling instead in the car-park. Management consequently proceeded to announce the sacking of workers through a barely audible megaphone announcement. When asked for written clarification, a note was passed to the workers which stated they had ten minutes to return to work or they would lose their jobs, but that the ten-minute period was already over.

By the end of the day, 800 workers

were left unemployed.

If more proof of the calculated actions of Gate Gourmet in engineering the unofficial action was needed, extra workers were ready to be bussed in to replace those sacked and companies trading with Gate Gourmet were warned the previous day that a dispute would occur.

Following the years of oppressive Conservative governments, the British trade unions remain the most impotent in Europe, with eight years of a Labour government refusing to repeal the vast majority of the anti-union legislation introduced in the 1980s. This is partly what allowed Gate Gourmet to operate such callous practices with such impunity.

However, the following day, 11 August, up to one thousand ground staff employed by British Airways at Heathrow Airport took unofficial strike action in solidarity with the sacked Gate Gourmet workers. The solidarity strike crippled BA for two days, costing the airline an estimated £40 million, with chaos ensuing at Heathrow, one of the world's busiest airports.

The strike put both BA and Gate Gourmet under enormous pressure, with the balance of forces at this point clearly favouring the workers. It was only the betrayal of the strike by the T&GWU that allowed the situation to be defused. In fact, the union's first action was to condemn the strike as illegal and demand its members return to work. Tony Woodley, T&GWU leader, wrote in a letter to BA in reference to the action that 'We do not condone what happened last week and we took appropriate steps to end the unofficial action.' The T&GWU bureaucracy clearly saw the need to protect its own privileges, its own 'partnership' with numerous other British corporations, as primary to protecting the interests of the low-paid workers it is supposed to represent.

Once the secondary action at Heathrow had been betrayed, the poorly-paid, largely Asian workforce of Gate Gourmet was reduced to a valiant but largely ineffective picket of Gate Gourmet headquarters. And even this has been attacked: on 13 September the High Court ruled that the picket be manned by no more than six workers, after Gate Gourmet brought charges of intimidation against the protesting workers.



Gate Gourmet workers protest

On 25 August T&GWU and Gate Gourmet, after days of negotiation, agreed on a deal. The result: 670 jobs lost and the catering company claiming it has won the right to refuse to re-employ 200 'militants'. The T&GWU claims the agreement reached as a package of 'vol-

untary redundancies'. This, however, is nothing but a smokescreen to cover the dire situation in which the union has left the Gate Gourmet workers: 'to take a minimal package of compensation or remain isolated and penniless until they finally leave with nothing'. Furthermore,

striking workers have received no strike pay for the last month.

The whole Gate Gourmet fiasco has shown-up the ruling class for what it truly is, and the depths its apologists in the trade union movement are willing to sink to defend it.



Truancy rates have risen to the highest levels ever recorded

Education Notes

SUSAN DAVIDSON

Working class whipping boy for Labour

Medieval courts had a jester to keep the king amused and a whipping boy who would be beaten when the king was feeling impotent and annoyed. Blair's first move on return to England from a Barbados millionaire tax-haven holiday was to announce zero tolerance of working class parents, his whipping boy. The duty of parents to keep good order and control will be the main focus of the next parliament, he said, in a cynical effort to divert attention away from the horrors of Iraq, the growing oil crisis, the bombing of London, rates of infection in the health system, the rise in racist attacks and the government's attack on civil rights.

Truancy rates rise by 10% to highest level ever recorded

No sooner had Blair threatened new legislation to punish parents than research was published showing that a previous 'zero tolerance' policy had crashed. The New Philanthropy Council (NPC) reported that government spending of over £1 billion together with new police powers to detain truants has failed to reduce the numbers of the 70,000 children who regularly bunk off school each day. The government's punitive response has been to promise that thousands more

working class parents will face gaol sentences. As we have predicted in Education Notes over the last few years, an increasingly competitive and hostile school regime will drive away children who are valued only so far as their SATS results improve the economic viability of the school by league table position. Again the government directs blame on the convenient poor, 'a stubborn minority of pupils', to explain away the failure of the education system they have created.

No tolerance for failure

Never mind, ploughing on regardless, another 'zero tolerance' policy was announced the following week, this time by Education Minister Kelly. 'Failing schools' will be allowed only one year to improve. If they don't they will be closed down, donated to the private sector (academies) or given to religious groups (faith schools). Since there are 285 schools in this category and others enter and leave the 'failing' category in cycles, we look forward to a lively year and a growth in zero tolerance for this disgraceful government.

Buy three, get one free

Academies are privately-sponsored state schools where private firms or organisations like the Vardy Fellowship, a fundamentalist Christian group under car salesman Peter Vardy, purchase schools. Blair's government has vowed to set up 200 of these schools by 2010. The deal is that for £2 million up front a buyer can sponsor a state school dictating curriculum and ethos while the state will pay the rest and running costs. So desperate is Labour to achieve this target that education ministers are now offering four schools for the price of three. There are even knock-down offers, as in the

London Borough of Greenwich where the council is so keen to set up a new academy that it is selling off the school playing fields of St Paul's Catholic Secondary School for £1.8 million which it will give to the archdiocese of Southwark so that the archdiocese can buy a new academy for just £200,000. The new academy will combine St-Paul's and Abbey Woods School. In the words of the head of Abbey Wood School, 'The land on which St Paul's stands belongs to (Greenwich) council. But it is being sold to benefit not just council taxpayers but a particular group who will be able to attend the new academy. I'm speechless'.

Parents sent 1,126 letters of which 1,122 objected to the plan for the new academy but the Schools Adjudicator rejected them.

Offa the target

The Office for Fair Access is a new set-up that was created to appease critics when university top-up fees were introduced. Its task is to ensure that a targeted number of students from state schools get university places, especially in the top institutions like Oxford (53.8% state pupils) and Cambridge (57.6% state pupils). It has failed and the upward trend is now a downward trend. Throughout UK universities the percentage of state school recruits fell from 87.2 to 86.8 last year. Since only 7% of pupils are in private education it is clear that buying education remains the best way to get a university place.

Reports also show a rising dropout rate of university students in their first year largely because of rising debt levels. And this is even before top-up fees of up to £3,000 a year start in September 2006.

Dale Farm Travellers resist eviction

BARNABY MITCHELL

Residents of Dale Farm near Cray's Hill in Essex continue to fight the attempts of the local council to forcibly evict them from their land and homes. The Travellers have won a High Court injunction which prevents their eviction by force. This injunction keeps the thugs of Constant and Co, a bailiffs' firm which specialises in evicting Gypsies and Travellers, and Malcolm Buckley, the head of Basildon Council, temporarily at bay. The community at Dale Farm, supported by other activists, are prepared to defend their community and resist any attempt to force them from their land. Basildon Council has allocated £2m to make these families homeless. The residents of Dale Farm bought the land at the site but have been denied planning permission. 90% of planning applications by Travellers are refused. The decision by Basildon Council to destroy

around 150 homes on private land at Dale Farm is to be the subject of a judicial review.

During the election the media attempted to incite racial hatred against travellers which culminated in the Sun's 'Stamp on the Camps' article. Since the election Travellers in the Brighton area have been stoned and a petrol bomb was thrown at caravans in Kent. Dale Farm was the site of Michael Howard's high profile pre-election anti-Gypsy rant which aimed at stoking the fires of race hatred against Gypsies and Travellers.

The Dale Farm site has become a haven for families evicted from other sites in Essex. Dale Farm's fight has become a test case in the defence of Traveller rights in the UK. If the families are evicted they will be forced into a desperate cycle of eviction and stop-gap encampments in unsuitable locations causing massive disruption to their lives and wellbeing.

For more information about how to support the campaign e-mail: dale.farm@ntlworld.com

Famine in Niger

IMF policies lead to starvation and death

CHARLES CHINWEIZU

Across the African continent, a food crisis of catastrophic proportions is again emerging, leaving 16.4 million across southern Africa and 17.9 million in the Horn of Africa in desperate and immediate need of food. In West Africa's Sahel region, millions are also slowly starving to death. In Niger, the worst affected country, some 3.6 million people are threatened by famine, with 2.5 million, including 800,000 children, on the brink of starvation. The famine has been blamed on a severe drought and an invasion of desert locusts, the worst in 15 years, which devastated crops across the Sahel between August and October 2004. But the catastrophe that exists in Niger today is the creation of imperialism. Cereal prices have risen sharply since 2000; millet, a staple grain, has doubled in price since last year. It is not food availability but food affordability that is

at the root of the unfolding tragedy. There is enough food to feed the hungry in Niger, which exports grain to wealthier neighbours Nigeria and Ghana, but the poor cannot afford to buy it. Some 32,000 children are severely malnourished and with the outbreak of deadly diseases such as cholera, malaria and diarrhoea, children are dying even in feeding centres.

Starvation and malnutrition are not new in Niger. A 1998 Food and Agriculture Organisation report revealed: 'rates of malnutrition among children are high throughout [Niger]: over 32% are stunted – half of them severely...over 15% are wasted, and over 36% [now 40%] are underweight.' With 63% of Niger's population living in grinding poverty, an abysmal public health system, limited access to sanitation facilities, 14% literacy rates, life expectancy of 42 years and infant mortality of 250 per 1,000 live births, there was little to cushion the effects of this famine, the most severe to date. Despite its huge reserves of uranium and gold, Niger is the second poorest country in the world.

Food availability

Erratic rains, rising oil prices and severe localised locust damage meant total grain production decreased last year, compared to 2003, by 27% in Senegal, 35% in Chad and 44% in Mauritania, as well as in coastal countries which subsequently imposed food export restrictions. However, decreases in the major cereal-producing Sahelian nations of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger were modest. Total grain production in 2004 was about 3.14 million tonnes, 11% below Niger's five yearly average, but 22% higher than the 2000 season, when there was no major food crisis.

Niger is a food deficit country and even in a normal year imports significant amounts of cereal to offset national shortfalls, estimated in 2005 to be over 0.5 million tonnes. Niger's main trading partners are Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria, but Nigeria has recently adopted a series of IMF and World Bank directed structural reforms to its agricultural and trade policies. This has led to unprecedented domestic rises in staple grain prices and

lower outflows of grain from Nigeria. The impact of these policies were felt the most by Niger, and were augmented by lower than normal food supplies in coastal countries such as Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire.

Response to the famine – the IMF wades in

Appeals for food aid in November 2004 by Niger's government and UN agencies were ignored by the 'international community', including the G8 and Live8 circus; by 18 June 2005 only one pledge of \$650,000 had been received. Only after BBC coverage of dying children did more pledges come in, but by August 2005, the UN's appeal for \$30.7 million had still not been met.

The Niger government and the UN's World Food Programme had opposed the distribution of free food in affected southern regions, on the basis it would interfere with the free market and disrupt Niger's development out of poverty! The EU and IMF urged the selling off of emergency food reserves, so as not to 'flood the market'. In February 2005, the Niger government sold cereal such as millet in affected areas at subsidised prices. The poor still couldn't afford it and continued to starve. In March the government raised VAT on basic consumer goods such as milk, flour and grains by 19%, a condition for further

IMF loans and the 100% debt relief promised as part of the much-criticised Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, imposed by EU finance ministers including Labour Chancellor Gordon Brown. The Niger government is absolutely determined to push through with the HIPC programme and a related Poverty Reduction Strategy which demands the pursuit of 'prudent macroeconomic policies, vigorous implementation of the structural reform agenda – especially in the public enterprise and financial sectors – and the development of a close dialogue with the private sector on economic policymaking'. This also requires the privatisation of the state banking, electricity and petroleum-importing companies.

In June the government adopted a food loan scheme whereby it gave two million subsistence farmers a bag of seeds and a bag of fertiliser each. It wasn't until 13 July that the Niger government, the EU and UN, faced with mass protests and the death of untold numbers of children, agreed to distribute free food. Even then the aid wasn't getting to those most in need and was unsuitable for malnourished children – but then aid is big business. Western manufacturers of tents, generators and high-energy emergency food supplies are doing very nicely, thank you, while the children of Niger continue to starve. ■

Ecuador Oil workers organise



ALVARO MICHAELS

Alarmed by the popular expulsion of President Lucio Gutierrez in April, the governing class hurriedly substituted un-elected Alfredo Palacio (see FRFI 185). He made a series of promises, hoping to calm the national outcry against the ruination of the country by imperialism, but the workers have not waited for the privileged class to betray them. In mid-August workers revolted in the Amazon provinces of Sucumbios and Orellana, dynamiting pipelines and stopping extraction, demanding the retention of oil wealth for investment in local towns and infrastructure.

Palacio, trying to ride the storm that pushed him into the presidency, had already changed the law to reduce the drain of oil revenues as debt to international banks, although he doesn't want a break with the World Bank. This was not enough for his Finance Minister, who resigned. Still Palacio pressed on, trying to show some independence from the US. Palacio has pressed Colombia to stop the aerial fumigation of coca and other crops in FARC-held areas near its borders. Ecuador has threatened to take Colombia to the OAS and International Court if it doesn't stop poisoning rural communities and the environment. It is even considering no longer referring to the FARC as terrorists.

Years of intense class struggle in Ecuador have shown the workers the impossibility of feeding both themselves and imperialism! No nonsense here ab-

out a 'third way'. On 14 August workers in the Amazon oil towns revolted at dreadful conditions there. They demanded the expulsion of foreign oil firms, sacking the government buildings in Lago Agrio. They demanded investment in schools, social services and transport. The government has claimed that \$200m of damage was inflicted. The strike paralysed oil production and shipment, stopping at least 1.5m barrels of oil. The following day the oil price rose to \$64.36 a barrel. Ecuador shipped 535,000 barrels a day during 2004, half of it to the US. A third of Ecuador's state revenue comes from oil.

On 17 August a state of emergency and curfew was declared. On 18 August the state-owned Petroecuador had to stop production and export of oil. Talks were hurriedly arranged in Quito with the leaders of the strike on 21 August. Such is the feeling against the corporations that local politicians were forced into siding with the workers, whether from genuine anger or from fear of losing their own privileges.

However the final deal excludes the strikers' demand that they would not face legal charges for their action. The multinationals would not accept this clause and prolonged negotiations for four days as the army slowly took back control of production facilities, to weaken the workers' position. Palacio sacked the defence minister for failing to get all the installations back. Meanwhile Congress, anxious to end the conflict and off-ended at its exclusion from events, lifted the state of emergency, hours before it could be raised through negotiation be-



tween the oil companies and the strikers. Eventually the local authorities and the multinationals agreed to act as 'good neighbours' in developing the region, with the Catholic church and civil rights organisations also signing the final agreement, which the workers' leaders took to mean no legal action against them. Limited production began again on the weekend of 20/21 August. Repairs will take until November.

Now 64% of the 25% tax on profits paid by the local oil companies will go to the two provinces. This presents a problem for the state, since this previously went to pay foreign debt. The corporations have also agreed to surface 260km of roads, employ more workers, and buy more local goods and services. Of course the oil corporations lose nothing, and can claim to be 'socially responsible' in their annual reports to shareholders in north America and Europe. Yet now there is less to share out among the foreign bankers and Ecuador's ruling groups, and if the price of oil falls back down this temporary arrangement will collapse, forcing the workers once again to face the task of seizing state power. ■

Nepal Rebels declare ceasefire

ANDREW ALEXANDER

On 2 September the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) declared a three-month long ceasefire to begin with immediate effect. In a statement the chairman of the CPN(M) Prachanda said that 'the decision to go for a unilateral ceasefire would encourage all political forces within and outside the country that want peace with a forward-looking political way out.'

The CPN(M) has stated it will remain in a position of 'active defence' and will resist only if there is an offensive from the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) or if there are troop manoeuvres. However, it will break the ceasefire and embark on an offensive of an even higher level if the government increases military activities. The CPN(M) refused calls by the government to disarm.

This ceasefire has come about due to: firstly a stalemate in the military campaign which has led to great hardship for the Nepalese people; secondly, the recent decision by the opportunist Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist) to accept elections to the constituent assembly (a key CPN(M) demand) and thirdly the decision of the Nepali Congress (Nepal's main social-democratic party) to remove the reference to 'constitutional monarchy' from its party statute. There has been a clear political shift amongst the bourgeois parties as a result of the king's clampdown in February (see FRFI 184: King suspends constitutional rule). The dictatorial King Gyanendra has given little room for manoeuvre to these forces and their subsequent change in position has been almost inevitable. By adopting a republican agenda, the political parties have also essentially accepted that the 1990 constitution, which led to a limited parliamentary rule, is defunct. Developments have confirmed the CPN(M)'s prognosis that the age-old conflict between the monarch and the people can only be resolved by a constituent assembly that asserts the will of the people.

The king has so far refused to respond to the ceasefire and has also ignored pleas to re-open dialogue with any of the main parties. While he still has the RNA and his generals on his side



King Gyanendra

he will continue to seek a military victory over the Maoist insurgency. Most imperialist analysts however believe that such an outcome is highly unlikely and are angered by his refusal to make any gesture of reform.

Reluctantly, imperialism has been forced to welcome the ceasefire but is clearly troubled by the political developments that have brought it about. India in particular is increasingly alarmed at the king's political self-made isolation and was infuriated at not being consulted before his clampdown on political and press freedoms in February. Prachanda has agreed to allow the UN to take a monitoring role in Nepal, but the king has so far rejected this possibility out of hand.

So far the US, Britain and India all continue to aid the RNA, despite recent developments. With one hand they gesture to the king to join the political process while with the other they arm his army. There is too much anxiety amongst the imperialists not to tolerate the king as their unruly puppet. Whatever crimes his vicious government continues to commit against the Nepalese people, in the final analysis they stand by his side. Imperialism is happy for a bloody stalemate to continue if that means the Nepalese people don't take control of their own destiny. However, the Nepalese people are gradually gaining control, taking the initiative and becoming increasingly more united. The Nepalese revolution is entering another crucial stage. ■

Chaos in Iraq

continued from page 1

A growing political toll in the US

On 16 September officially declared US military deaths in Iraq were 1,899. 96 British soldiers had been killed, including three by late September. For the four months up to September the monthly average US military personnel killed was 78.5, compared with 60.4 for the same period in 2004. Estimates of 'occupation forces' wounded and not returned to combat range from 7,000 to 20,000. Approximately one million US servicemen and women have now served in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Iraqi resistance inflicts a growing attrition on the occupation forces; sufficient to reduce their presence on the streets and to force them to resort to increased use of Iraqi forces. Furthermore, the resistance is eroding the US people's support for the war. The war is seen as inflicting sacrifices with no reward in sight.

Iraqi oil production reaches a maximum of 2.2 million barrels a day, about 0.5 million barrels below the pre-war level. Some days it is half this amount. The US has imposed long term contracts to buy Iraqi oil at \$20 a barrel, less than a third of its world market price.

Two US research groups put the cost of the war to the US at \$5.6 billion a month. This is \$0.5 billion more than the monthly cost of the Vietnam War, discounting for inflation. However, it should be noted that today's costs constitute a smaller part of the US economy than did those at the time of the Vietnam War.

Sections of the US ruling class always opposed the war on Iraq and they are anxious. Writing in the *Financial Times* (6 September 2005) Michael Lind uses Paul Kennedy's concept of 'imperial over-extension' to describe the US predicament. He blames the costs of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq for reducing funds available for New Orleans flood defences. He says that with declining US army recruitment the state is forced to turn to National Guard reservists and private security firms and he claims that the border with Mexico is inadequately guarded due to overseas commitments. 'The attempt to establish American global hegemony without paying for it was a disaster - actually, several disasters - waiting to happen... Supporters of the war in Iraq predicted that the dominos would fall in the Middle East. Instead, the dominos are falling across America.'

There are some in the US ruling class who are aware that the preoccupation with Iraq leaves their interests exposed to attack in the Americas. Iraq consumes resources and diverts the political attention needed to tackle the rising demands of Latin American people led by Cuba and Venezuela. US ruling class hegemony in the continent is being challenged. In capitalist terms, the invasion of Iraq is seen as a poor investment.

On 9 September *The Los Angeles Times* reported that the US has suspended major reconstruction projects in Iraq. 'We do not have the money', a senior US advisor on Iraq told the US House Appropriations Subcommittee. Security accounts for 22% of any Iraqi reconstruction project. Private security staff receive up to \$1,000 a day.

Conditions in Iraq remain dire: some areas get less than four hours electricity a day; a quarter of \$200 million worth of US-funded water projects do not work because of, according to a Government Accountability report, 'looting, unreliable

electricity or inadequate Iraqi staff and supplies'. \$2.6 billion has been spent on water projects, half the original budget because the rest was diverted to security. There is a reported surge in diarrhoea and dehydration among children and the elderly. Unemployment remains around 50% of the workforce. Corruption takes place on a breathtaking scale with billions of dollars stolen.

Enlisting allies

The imperialists are trying to cement their relationships to the Iraqi bourgeoisie and integrate local militias into their occupation force. The draft constitution presented at the end of August was described as 'serving Kurdish and Shia privilege', meaning their bourgeois leadership. The 15 Sunni representatives on the drafting committee rejected the draft. By providing a weak central state and proposing a more federal structure, the draft constitution intends to allocate oil revenues to the southern Shia leadership and the northern Kurdish leadership. Existing oil fields would be controlled by central government, but provincial authorities would control newly discovered fields.

The Sunni representatives said the proposed constitution would 'splinter' Iraq and give Iran a foothold in the south. Shi'ite Muqtada al Sadr and the Mahdi Army opposed the draft with Al Sadr referring to 'the noble resistance' of the Sunnis and saying that Iraq was ruled by a colonial regime. Joint Sunni and Shia protests against the proposals took place in several towns.

A referendum on the constitution is scheduled for 15 October. A no vote by two-thirds of voters in three of Iraq's provinces would nullify the charter and new elections would have to be held and a new drafting committee would produce another constitution. Saddam Hussein's trial is due to start on 19 October. The referendum and the trial are intended to give the impression that a new order is underway and getting things done.

Journalists report the local police in Basra, under British control, as being 'infiltrated' by Shia militias. Two US journalists investigating this 'infiltration' were shot dead, the first by men in police uniforms. Those who report this so-called 'infiltration' have not studied British counter-insurgency

methods in the north of Ireland, Kenya, Malaya etc. The British military seek to associate with and then absorb militias into the imperialist forces. As the events in Basra demonstrated (see box) this tactic is not with-

Basra: the lie exposed

The sight of a British soldier fleeing a burning armoured vehicle surrounded by Iraqi protesters exposed as a lie the carefully cultivated image of British soldiers as peacekeepers in Iraq. In its place were plainclothes SAS soldiers killing Iraqi police officers and British tanks bulldozing Basra's police headquarters.

It began when the occupation armies captured Iraq and sacked the Ba'athist police and army. Anyone who opposed the Ba'athists was eligible to join the new police and army, among these were the militias. Earlier this year Basra's police chief said he had lost control of three-quarters of his men. On 18 September British troops arrested leading members of the Mahdi Army. The following day Iraqi police stopped an unmarked car containing the two SAS soldiers, an anti-tank weapon and assault rifles. The SAS shot dead a police officer. They were then taken into police custody. If they were passed to the Mahdi Army no doubt the British military feared they would be used to barter for the release of the Mahdi Army commanders. The British said that Iraqi forces must hand over British personnel to the coalition forces. When they were not released, ten tanks demolished the police headquarters.

On 21 September hundreds of Iraqi civilians and police protested outside the headquarters demanding that the two SAS soldiers be tried by an Iraqi court. The next day Basra's city council ended all co-operation with British forces and banned them from all government buildings. Basra's governor described the British actions as 'barbaric, savage and irresponsible'. Iraq's National Security advisor called the British operation 'a flagrant breach of Iraqi sovereignty'. A Basra judge issued an arrest warrant for the two SAS soldiers. British troops kept a low profile.



'The outcomes of this divide and rule strategy are increased sectarian tensions, strife and a tendency towards civil war.'

out dangers to the imperialists. There is a consistent strategy going all the way back to the British occupation of India. Recently, Shia military units have been deployed alongside US troops in the chiefly Sunni Fallujah. In Tikrit, former home of Saddam Hussein, the US uses Kurdish forces. This is deliberately using and fomenting sectarian divisions as an element of political strategy. In Tal Afar in September the US deployed Kurdish and Shia battalions alongside its own units to attack a mainly Sunni town.

The main Shia militia are the Badr Organisation and the Mahdi Army, led by Muqtada al Sadr. The Badr Organisation is attached to the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, which sided with Iran in the Iran-

of mostly Sunnis in the Basra area since May. There have been death squad abductions of scores of Sunnis in different parts of Iraq. These are conducted in a similar fashion to those in Central America and Peru two decades ago: bodies mutilated and left to be discovered to intimidate local populations.

The outcomes of this divide and rule strategy are increased sectarian tensions, strife and a tendency towards civil war. On 31 August approximately 1,000 Shia pilgrims were killed in a stampede on a bridge in Baghdad. The bridge spanned between predominantly Shia and Sunni areas. The stampede was triggered by a false rumour of a Sunni suicide bomber.

Whatever imperialism planned for Iraq it seems to be reconciled to now having no alternative to Balkanisation if it is to dominate the territory and the region. The national resistance can present itself as defending the integrity of Iraq while the puppet government looks increasingly to represent factional privileges. The route imperialism is taking is fraught with dangers for it. Autonomy for Iraq's Kurds could provoke the Turkish state to attack its own Kurdish population and amass its army along the frontier with Iraq. Syria and Iran have their own Kurds struggling for independence. Greater powers for the Shia bourgeoisie strengthen Iranian influence in Iraq. The perceived inability of the US and Britain to impose their will on Iraq, and the straining of their military powers in the effort to do so, reduces their ability to intimidate and attack Syria and Iran.

Despite President Bush's talk of reducing US troop commitments to Iraq, the numbers of US soldiers in the country are being increased from 138,000 to 160,000 ahead of the constitution referendum. The US Army's Chief of Staff, General Schoomaker, said the US may have to keep 100,000 troops in Iraq for another four years. Following the occupation forces' transfer of military responsibility for Najaf to the Iraqi army, three other Shia cities are to be placed under Iraqi army control. This is intended to allow US troops to concentrate on Baghdad and Sunni areas. The imperialists reckon on containing the Sunni-led resistance and drawing former Ba'athist leaders into their political process.

US forces are building major military bases in Iraq for a permanent presence and they have no option but to strive to control the oil reserves and distribution. From the first Gulf war to the sanctions, no-fly zones and bombing raids, imperialism has been at war with Iraq for 15 years. The British military has mounted approximately 30 separate military interventions in the Middle East since 1945. Imperialism is at permanent war in the Middle East. The Labour government's part in the war was crucial to its waging. The continuing British occupation is vital for the US occupation. Socialists demand self-determination for Iraq. British troops out of Iraq and the Middle East. ■

Ireland: loyalism runs riot

The Orange marching season over the summer has been the occasion for innumerable attacks on nationalist communities throughout the Six Counties, although the media has focused on loyalist violence against the police and British army. This has been the backdrop against which the IRA publicly announced (28 July) that it was ending its armed campaign. Meanwhile, yet another report has been published confirming the sectarian character of the Six County statelet and detailing the level of intimidation and discrimination endured by nationalists in the north. PAUL MALLON reports.

Loyalist violence

The latest round of Orange violence followed a disputed loyalist march through a nationalist area of West Belfast on 10 September. Mobs invaded nationalist areas in the Grosvenor Road in Belfast, Ligoniel and Ahoghill village, attacking churches, schools and businesses. They also turned their attention on the police and British army, using pipe and blast bombs against the state forces and exchanging gunfire.

The graphic TV images of the loyalist gangs throwing petrol bombs at riot police have obscured the nationalist community's daily experience of sectarian attack. Thus on 10 August, an Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) gang murdered 15-year-old Catholic schoolboy Thomas Devlin as he made his way home after buying sweets in a nearby shop in north Belfast. In a flagrant denial of the facts, the police declared the attack to be 'not sectarian'. In the last two years, loyalist

death squads have carried out 38 murders.

Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) collusion with the UVF is evident: there are photographs of members of the UVF leaning into PSNI military vehicles during recent loyalist attacks on nationalist homes in Ahoghill, County Antrim. Earlier, the PSNI had responded to loyalist arson attacks on nationalist homes by issuing fire blankets to residents. In late August, a number of nationalist families had to abandon their homes and move out of the area. PSNI officers routinely refuse to confront loyalist mobs, preferring instead to remain inside their vehicles.

On 14 September, Northern Ireland minister Peter Hain finally announced that the British government no longer recognised the phony ceasefire of the main loyalist death squad, the Ulster Volunteer Force. But he ignored the activities of the other main loyalist death squad, the Ulster Defence As-

sociation, which has played a central role in the recent violence. Hain's statement will have no effect on the overall crisis since the British government has no sanctions for the loyalist death squads.

A sectarian state

A recently published report on sectarian violence in the north of Ireland confirms the analysis of those who have viewed the peace process as a sham. *No longer a problem? Sectarian violence in Northern Ireland* by Dr Neil Jaraman details the sectarian violence endemic in the north of Ireland. The report covers the 11 years since the 1994 ceasefire and argues that sectarian violence is now at a higher level than before 1994. More people are being driven out of their homes; on a ten-year average 1,378 people a year are being forced to re-house due to intimidation.

have actually been reinforced. Jaraman's report also identifies the appalling response of the PSNI to the sectarian crimes. As FRFI has consistently pointed out, the Six Counties is a sectarian state which is founded on discrimination against the nationalist community. The peace process cannot alter this reality, since Unionist supremacy remains unchanged.

IRA: end of armed struggle

On 28 July the IRA announced a formal end to its armed campaign. It made its decision after Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams called on it in April to pursue its goals exclusively through peaceful political means. Its statement was greeted with claims that it had removed the major obstacle in the peace process – the existence of the IRA. Though the announcement was hardly a surprise, the media still



A lorry burns during loyalist riots in Belfast

Statistics reveal that north Belfast in particular endures the highest level of sectarianism. Between 1996 and 2004, there were 6,623 incidents of sectarian disorder including 3,883 of criminal damage, 1,343 of assault, 1,021 disturbances and 376 riots. The population of north Belfast is around 86,000. Of the 37 'peace walls' across the north of Ireland, none have been removed since the ceasefire and 18

described it as 'historic' and 'ground-breaking', and Tony Blair claimed it was a 'step of unparalleled magnitude'. Yet two and half years ago, FRFI wrote that:

'Despite the IRA's rejections of what it called "unrealistic ultimatums" in regard to calls for its disbandment... The reality... is that the Ulster Unionist Party and the British government have manoeuvred the IRA into a

position where nothing short of a significant statement from the IRA on disbandment will restore the devolved institutions. The Republican movement is once again being compelled to save the peace process.' (FRFI 171 February/March 2003)

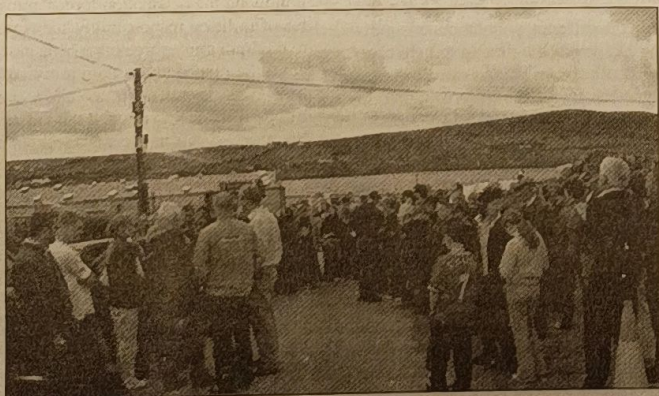
Since that period there has been a stalemate which elections to the dissolved assembly in 2003 and further elections to Westminster in May 2005 have failed to dispel. The 2005 elections in fact reinforced the deadlock as the Unionist community elected the Protestant fundamentalist Ian Paisley as their leader. The IRA's statement is an acknowledgement that the Unionist veto will remain within the politics of the Six Counties.

Policing the crisis

The PSNI, established in 1999 as part of the present peace deal, is only a re-badged version of the sectarian RUC. Under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement new police boards were established to co-opt nationalists and legitimise the PSNI. The next phase in the political absorption of the Republican movement into the British system will be Republican participation on the policing boards. The logic of Sinn Féin's political path means it will begin to advance the view that the only way to give nationalists any respite from loyalist attacks will be for Republicans to engage in policing the North.

The IRA was established in order to defend nationalists from sectarian attack from both the loyalist death squads and the British army. The recent violence of the loyalist mobs demonstrates that nothing has fundamentally changed since the 1994 IRA ceasefire. The Unionist veto and Unionist supremacy remains at the heart of the political process – a reality daily enforced by the loyalist mobs. Now that the IRA has chosen to disarm without breaking the Unionist veto, new dangers are opening up for nationalists in the Six Counties. The political leadership of the Republican movement remains entirely dependent upon a political process that only reinforces loyalist reaction. Those forces within the nationalist working class who will inevitably emerge to defend their areas from attack will not only come up against the fascist mobs and the British state, but also against those whose political careers are dependent on the process itself. ■

Shell washes up in Ireland



Protesters supporting the Roscommon Five

Five farmers remain indefinitely imprisoned for contempt of court after defying an Irish High Court ruling that they must comply with the Shell-led construction of a high-pressure gas pipeline across their land near Rosport, County Mayo.

The June ruling followed five years of legal haggling between the Anglo-Dutch multinational Shell and its partners, Mayo County Council, local residents and environmental groups. The pipeline will run 70km from the offshore Corrib field to a proposed onshore terminal at Broadhaven Bay,

and 8km through the farmers' land, past houses, a pub and a school, to a massive refinery at Bellanaboy. The refinery will have nine huge chimneys, from which the emissions of carbon dioxide and methane will be equivalent to the global warming potential of 27,000 cows. Environmental groups have also been warning about the potential effects of toxic emissions on Broadhaven Bay, an important breeding ground for various species of whale and dolphin, and Carrowmore Lake, the source of the regional water supply. Both areas are 'protected' under EU habitat directives, but in spite of this the 26-County government and High Court have effectively legalised the irreversible destruction of a large section of Ireland's western coastline.

The Republic of Ireland currently offers the lowest tax rates on commercial expropriation of national oil and gas reserves in Europe. Its 25% tax compares to rates as high as 79% in other European countries. 100% tax write-offs allow costs to be deducted from the tax-bills of Shell and other pirates. Enterprise Oil first won the Corrib contract from the governing Fianna Fail party in 1996, before

being swallowed up by the opportunistic Shell in 2002. Fianna Fail, which liberalised the tax laws in 1992, was rewarded for its selfless gift on the behalf of the Irish people. The Galway Races of 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001 saw major fundraising events for the party – taken care of by none other than Enterprise Oil.

Not only does Fianna Fail care nothing for the environment, however it obviously has no interest in the safety and wellbeing of the citizens of County Mayo either. The entire onshore development is to be built on unstable peat bogs, and the pipeline has a half-mile burn radius. Last year a similar pipeline exploded in Belgium killing 15 people, and the same scenario saw 12 deaths in New Mexico in August 2000.

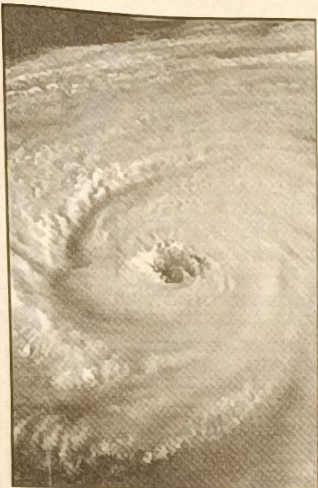
Pickets of Shell forecourts, rallies and marches in support of the Rosport Five sprang up across the 26 Counties after the High Court ruling, with some Shell workers even downing tools after consistent local action. The furore led the complicit Natural Resources Minister Noel Dempsey to commission a further safety review in July, and 3km of pipeline were dismantled as a result of 'a serious breach of the consents given to Shell in relation to the pipeline'. In August, however, Dempsey showed his true colours and gave Shell his blessing to continue with the construction of the offshore section of the development.

Shell has since announced that it will delay continued construction until 2006, which will apparently 'not materially affect the project's completion schedule'. This is in complete contrast to their successful argument for an injunction against the Rosport farmers in May. Shell's barrister argued that the company would lose €25,000 per day for each day's delay after 1 June, and that stalling the project until 2006 would be at the cost of a €2,500,000 remobilisation fee. Whatever the costs, Shell and Fianna Fail both imagine that by letting off steam for a few months they will be able to quell dangerous levels of discontent that threaten to scrap not only the Corrib project but also the credibility of a corrupt government.

The Rosport Five have been told they will remain in prison until they have 'purged their contempt', but they have themselves pledged not to do so until Shell and Fianna Fail purge theirs. The solidarity movement is steadily gaining momentum, and herein lies the dilemma for its opposite number in government. How can the piracy of Ireland's gas go ahead without more unpopular arrests and imprisonment?

Send letters of support to the Rosport Five: Willie Corduff, Philip McGrath, Brendan Philbin, Vincent McGrath and Michael O'Suighin, Cloverhill Prison, Clondalkin, Dublin 22, Ireland.

Willem van Wyklouw



HURRICANE

the exposure of a rotten racist state

Imperialism flattens hurricane survivors

Hurricane Katrina ripped the mask off the face of US imperialism, exposing the ugly, cruel, vicious, racist, exploitative nature of capitalism. The hurricane was an appalling destructive natural disaster. But for millions of Americans, overwhelmingly poor, US imperialism has turned it into a catastrophe. It shows the utter futility of capitalism, which, planless, riddled with corruption, putting private property before people, reacting after the event instead of preparing in advance, has nothing, absolutely nothing, to offer the poor and oppressed. US capitalism failed to evacuate everybody from the area in time, failed to rescue everyone afterwards, failed to bring relief in any kind of adequate and organised way and is preparing to turn reconstruction efforts into one big trough awash in billions of dollars for big corporations to guzzle down. **STEVE PALMER** reports from the US.

A much-trumpeted evacuation plan for New Orleans turned out to be just hot air. The middle class fled in their SUVs. The hurricane hit, the levees (dykes) protecting the city burst, flooding the city. The city's poor, who are overwhelmingly black, were without transport and were left behind to fend for themselves. The huge fleet of 700 school and transit buses, which might have evacuated thousands of people, were not used and became flooded and useless.

Dramatic scenes were splashed across primetime television for days, with unceasing exposure of the plight of poor, predominantly black, New Orleaners trying to survive. The media quickly depicted black people the way they find most endearing: as helpless victims or congenital criminals, a pathetic yet anarchic mass. Wild unsubstantiated rumours of rape and murder were repeated as if fact, feeding racist fantasies. The madness reached its apogee when supposed 'civil rights veteran' Randall Robinson claimed that 'black hurricane victims in New Orleans have begun eating corpses to survive'. Inevitably, conservative commentators were soon repeating Robinson's stupid fabrication, describing the tired and hungry masses as 'savages', 'animals' and 'cannibals'.

Two paramedics, Larry Bradshaw and Lorrie Slonsky, who are shop stewards from San Francisco, recounted what really happened. Far from being a passive begging mass:

'What we witnessed were the real heroes and sheroes of the hurricane relief effort: the working class of New Orleans. The maintenance workers who used a fork lift to carry the sick and disabled. The engineers, who rigged, nurtured and kept the generators running. The electricians who improvised thick extension cords stretching over blocks to share the little electricity we had in order to free cars stuck on rooftop parking lots. Nurses who took over for mechanical ventilators and spent many hours on end manually forcing air into the lungs of unconscious patients to keep them alive. Doormen who rescued

folks stuck in elevators. Refinery workers who broke into boat yards, "stealing" boats to rescue their neighbours clinging to their roofs in flood waters. Mechanics who helped hot-wire any car that could be found to ferry people out of the City. And the food service workers who scoured the commercial kitchens improvising communal meals for hundreds of those stranded.'

Most of the 'looting' which shocked white America was in fact, semi-organised requisitioning, as Denise Moore, who was stuck in the convention centre explained:

'Yes, there were young men with guns there. But they organised the crowd. They went to Canal Street and "looted", and brought back food and water for the old people and the babies, because nobody had eaten in days. When the police rolled down windows and yelled out "the buses are coming", the young men with guns organised the crowd in order: old people in front, women and children next, men in the back. Just so that when the buses came, there would be priorities of who got out first.'

While the poor were left to slowly starve, the capitalist state sprang into action to defend private property, pouring armed National Guard into the city. Hundreds of mercenaries from Blackwater Associates, including two former bodyguards to Paul Bremer, patrolled the streets of rich neighbourhoods. Granta Police fired shots to prevent the refugees from entering dry areas of the city. The Army Times reported that 'Troops begin combat operations in New Orleans' to 'fight the insurgency'.

The death and destruction also spread across Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida, devastating an area as big as Britain. Hundreds of thousands of Latinos live in the area, most of them undocumented workers. Scared of being thrown out of the country, only a few hundred have registered with the authorities for relief benefits. Workers from the Caribbean who worked on Mississippi's casino boats, had visas tied to their jobs and don't know their immigration status.

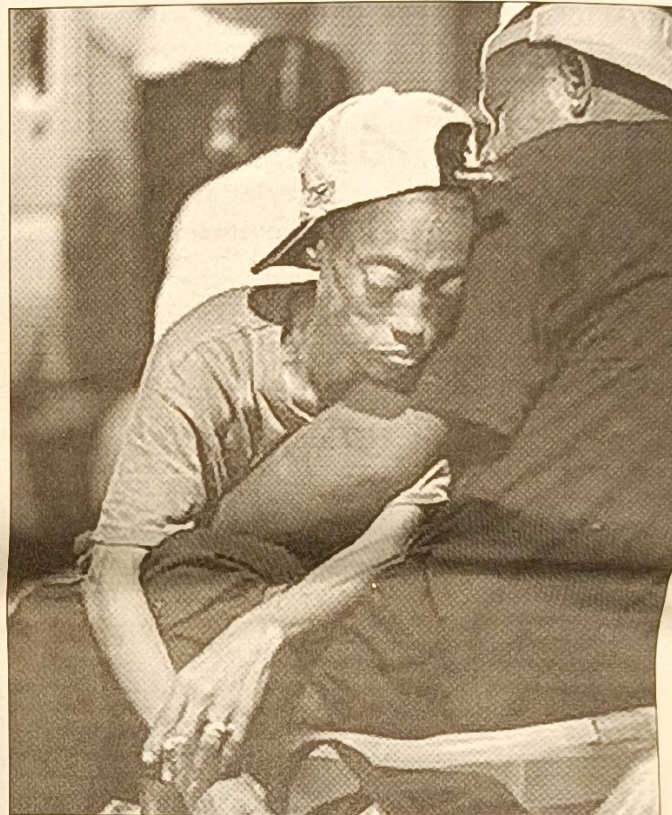
Was the bungled preparation, evacuation and rescue inevitable? Not at

all: tiny socialist Cuba gets hit by many of the same hurricanes as the US, without the total human suffering, because the state represents not private property, but the majority of the people; people come before things; there is thorough planning, preparation and total involvement of the population. Planning in the US serves the large corporations, which dominate the economy, not the people. Walmart and Home Depot used their superbly organised supply chains to move water, food, plywood boards and emergency materials efficiently to their stores beforehand. But this was only for paying customers, not for everyone. So what stopped the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) from doing the same thing for everyone?

Work for FEMA - no experience necessary

FEMA has horrified even some capitalists by turning away trailers full of water that companies were donating to flood victims in New Orleans. Not content with screwing up the rescue, the FEMA bureaucracy is turning the relief effort into a hopeless mess - turning away donations, preventing volunteers from participating 'for security reasons', delaying and postponing vital decisions, unable to coordinate its own operations.

The Democrats claim this is because Bush has replaced professionals, who know what they're doing, with political appointees: for example, head of FEMA Michael Brown's previous job, before he was fired from it, was with the International Arabian Horse Association. Republicans have responded by attacking 'bureaucracy'. Is there something about large organisations or government departments which means that everything is delayed and disorganised? Not at all. Capitalist bureaucracy is dedicated to serving the needs of capital, not of working people: it was capable of organising effectively to attack Iraq. Anything else is a perfunctory duty, a crumb thrown to give some credibility to the appearance of helping everyone. A police officer who saves someone from drowning in the morning is just diverting from his main job: he or she



will be hard at work cracking a striker's skull in the afternoon and harassing and framing black youth in the evening.

There is no way that this kind of state can effectively organise, mobilise and harness the energy of the entire population: it must be in control, must be in charge at all times, dare not, cannot leverage the spontaneity of the population, when they volunteer or donate in kind, even if this kills people.

Where the buck stops

If the state is moving at snail's pace to help the suffering population, it is moving like greased lightning to help capital profit from the crisis. Bush has signed an Executive Order waiving the application of the 1931 Davis-Bacon Act in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi. The Davis-Bacon Act applies to Federal construction contracts, requiring that they pay at least the prevailing local wage. This is a clear attack on trade unions. The Department of Labor has suspended affirmative action requirements designed to ensure that minorities, women, veterans and disabled people are equitably represented amongst employees working on Federal contracts.

With the wholesale destruction of the housing stock, rented property is suddenly at capacity in the area. This will only lead to further rent rises. Gas is at a premium, having almost doubled in price over the last year. Public transport has been obliterated in some areas. Even their insurance policies may turn out to be worthless. Insurance companies, sitting on some \$1.3 trillion of reserves, have decided

that the storm damage was due to flood, not wind damage. Since only a minority of families, those residing in the floodplain, purchase flood insurance, this means that many families will be left without funds to rebuild their homes. The insurance companies have been offering small 'emergency payments' which quietly slip waivers of any future compensation into their fine print.

Yet, if workers have to tighten their belts, the capitalists are being encouraged to let them out. Along with a huge package of \$62bn of Federal spending has come the raising of purchasing limits. Before, a purchase had to exceed only \$2,500 to require scrutiny; now this has been raised to \$250,000, a surefire guarantee of padded contracts, corrupt dealings and fraudulent purchases. A recent audit revealed that employees at the Department of Agriculture (USDA) diverted millions of dollars to personal purchases through their government credit cards. Investigators estimated that 15% abused their government credit cards at a cost of \$5.8 million, buying Ozzy Osbourne concert tickets, tattoos, lingerie, bartender school tuition, car payments, and pizzas. Amongst the military, apparently a racier crowd, the cards have been used to finance gambling, visits to strip clubs, cruise tickets and 'transactions at houses of prostitution'. Faced with this abuse, raising the spending limit a hundredfold will do nothing to help the hurricane victims, but is guaranteed to ensure a hundredfold increase in corruption.

These were the same changes that led to the phenomenal profiteering

Katrina survivors organise

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the Houston Astrodome, long a symbol of public sector obedience to the interests of private capital, became the scene of something else: a successful effort among the displaced poor and working class of New Orleans to organize themselves to confront the power structures that left them stranded. DALTON HILLIARD, a New Orleans native living in Houston, reports.

The contrast was telling. On the first Saturday at the mass shelter in the Houston Astrodome, tens of thousands of New Orleans residents, having spent the better part of a week facing polluted flood waters, government neglect and racism, now were treated to a circus of political opportunism and condescension. Liberal politicians like Reverend Jesse Jackson and Bill and Hillary Clinton, moths to the flame of the international media presence, brought entourages intrusively through the rows of cots lining the stadium floor. Loudest of all, Oprah Winfrey and a host of multimillionaire black celebrities took to the PA system to let 'their people' know that everything was going to be alright.

At the same time that Saturday, in one section of the stadium's bleachers, something very different was going on. A group of 40 evacuees were meeting to discuss an agenda of demands and develop an organizing strategy to get them met.

The anger in the group was palpable.

Everyone had spent days in the flood, waiting – on rooftops, in attics, on interstates, in the New Orleans Superdome – while helicopters circled endlessly, shining lights but

bringing no food, no water and no means to escape. National guardsmen, when they finally arrived at the Superdome, threw meal packets down to people from an overpass 'like they were feeding dogs'.

When Charles Dixon, after waiting two days on an interstate, attempted to lead a group of several hundred families across a bridge on foot into Jefferson Parish, the white-flight suburb that borders New Orleans and one of the few dry parts of the metropolitan area, they were turned back. Police officials announced into a megaphone that Jefferson Parish was not an evacuation route and warning shots rang out over their heads.

Most of the evacuees in the meeting that Saturday were still missing family members, who either had been separated in the flood or, more common, during the evacuation from New Orleans. At many of the pickup points, the authorities, when they finally arrived, divided men, women and children onto separate buses, which were heading, it turned out, to separate cities.

Several members of the group had found that their cell phones, their only means of communication, had been cut off the day before, because they had been unable to pay their bills.

The group decided to form a new organization, the Survivors Leadership Group (SLG), to organize fellow survivors and advocate for their collective interests. They drew up a petition with their demands: provide immediate financial assistance; initiate a transition to dignified living; create a public database of survivors; improve communication and provide a long-term recovery package.

In one week, the Survivors Leadership Group had got 5,000 signatures from Katrina evacuees, held a press conference with international media, and were seeing substantial progress on the five points. They got the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to forbid cell-phone providers from cutting off cell phones from disaster-affected areas for three

months. And they got Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), on the ropes for their pathetic failure in New Orleans, to implement an immediate assistance grant of \$2,000, which exempted Katrina victims from the usual red-tape of the FEMA process.

None of this is to suggest, even remotely, that the recovery process

'...the political and capitalist elite have been shaken by how nakedly the divisions of class and race, on which their own power depends, were suddenly revealed for all the world to see.'

overall has been handled well. Notwithstanding several important local victories, the rigidity and incompetence of FEMA and others has been as thorough in the month following Katrina as it was in the first week, when people were drowning and starving in New Orleans.

Still, the experience of the SLG does point the way towards what will be necessary if Katrina is to become a watershed moment of change in the political culture of the United States and lead to a significant shift in the class-orientation of US politics.

The tragedy of Katrina has the potential to play that role, for several reasons. First, its lessons are so obvious and, temporarily, so widely understood. Who can now claim not to understand the human consequences of chronic underinvestment in the public sector? Who can deny the deep racism and class division at the heart of American capitalism, which determined who lived and who died, who got out and who got left behind?

Second, the political and capitalist elite have been shaken by how nakedly the divisions of class and race, on which their own power depends, were suddenly revealed for all the world to see. It is this, and the attempt on the part of those elites to compensate for their embarrassment, that gave the SLG the political space



A heavily armed SWAT team patrols the streets in New Orleans as refugees wait for help

to accomplish what they have.

Third, Katrina has been the occasion of a sudden and significant shift in class relations in a major US city, between the middle-class and the working poor. It was not just the poor of New Orleans who did not have insurance to cover their losses, who have been left homeless and jobless, but the working and middle class as well. Historically, where the middle class leans, so go politics, and the fact that a substantial portion of the middle class has suddenly become unemployed or working poor creates an opportunity for political realignment.

There is, furthermore, a precedent in the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927, the political fallout from which led to a substantial shift in US politics in the late 1920s, laying the groundwork for the New Deal.*

The fundamental question, then, is whether Katrina, in the long term, will become the occasion for a significant political shift, or whether it will be covered over in collective amnesia and sentimentalization.

And it is here that the example of the SLG is instructive. For if we rely on the Bill Clintons and Hillary Clintons, the Jesse Jackson's and the other liberal political opportunists to be the voice of indignation on this national outrage; if we tolerate the celebrity spokespeople of liberal Hollywood speaking for us on this issue, then the battle is lost before it begins.

If, however, we take the example of

the New Orleans Survivors – who ignored the media circus to get down to organizing – then hope may come, after all, from the stinking floodwaters of New Orleans.

*In the flood of 1927, over 1000 lives were lost in the Mississippi Delta region, levees were intentionally blown at the behest of New Orleans bankers to flood working class communities and protect bankers' interests, and thousands of black sharecroppers were held in concentration camps and forcibly forbidden from evacuating, because of the fear among large southern farmers that, if they let blacks evacuate, they would not come back, and they would lose their agricultural labor force.

These events were on the front pages of newspapers nationwide for months, and as a result, deep realities of the US class struggle in the 1920s, kept far from the public sphere for years, became fuel for a movement of change.

The populist radical Huey P Long then rode the wave of anger about the flood to his election as Louisiana Governor in 1928, on a platform that included a progressive income tax, increased funding for education, public works to rebuild Louisiana and the US, an end to wars for empire, and an end to financial oligarchy.

Long was assassinated in 1935 as he prepared to run for president, but it was his threat from the radical left that pushed the Roosevelt Democrats to implement the New Deal.

See John M. Barry, *Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America*.

and mismanagement of money by the Provisional Administration in Iraq. And just like Iraq, huge no-bid contracts have been handed out to politically connected corporations like Fluor, the Shaw Group, Bechtel and KBR, a Halliburton subsidiary. These contracts are awarded on a 'cost-plus' basis, guaranteeing profits, however much money is spent.

The final, perhaps cruellest and most appropriate act of capital, however, may be in what it decides to do with New Orleans. The city was already a disaster area for black people, who were two-thirds of the inhabitants. One third of the population had incomes below the poverty line, 40% were functionally illiterate; the school dropout rate was between 35 and 50%. The infant mortality rate for blacks was 14.3 per thousand live births. The city was riddled with crime: in a recent experiment, the police fired off 700 blank rounds – no-one reported the gunfire. Serious measures to change this have been ignored until the hurricane gave developers the opportunity: 'We finally cleaned up public housing in New Orleans', Representative Richard Baker boasted. 'We couldn't do it, but God did.' The anticipated renewal will completely remake the city. The wealthy white families want the black population removed. According to one: 'Those who want to see this city rebuilt want to see it done in a completely different way: demographically, geographically and politically. ... The way we've been living is not going to happen again or we're out.' ■

An unnatural disaster

Before Katrina hit the US three hurricanes had already reached Category 4 or 5 across the Gulf of Mexico*, a total which is unprecedented for so early in the season. Katrina was initially a weak Category 1 hurricane when it crossed Florida. It wasn't until it passed over the warm Gulf waters that it picked up strength, peaking at Category 5 with winds of over 100 miles per hour when it struck New Orleans. A lot of fingers are pointing to global warming.

The main factor in the formation of a hurricane is sea surface temperature. Warm water, and the subsequent instability in the lower atmosphere, is the energy source of hurricanes. According to researchers at the Georgia Institute of Technology and the US National Center for Atmospheric Research, in the past 35 years the number of Category 4 and 5 hurricanes worldwide has almost doubled. The change occurred as global sea-surface temperatures rose over the same period. Peter Webster, one of the researchers at the centre, said that 'in the 1970s, there was an average of about 10 Category 4 and 5 hurricanes per year globally. Since 1990, the number of Category 4 and 5 hurricanes has almost doubled, averaging 18 per year globally.' These intense storms made up about 20% of all hurricanes in the 1970s, but over

the past decade they have accounted for around 35%.

Webster also pointed out that the 0.5°C rise between 1970 and 2004 in sea surface temperatures was likely to be down to global warming. Since the 1970s global sea-surface temperatures have risen from 0.25 to 0.5 degrees Celsius in hurricane seasons depending on the region. A 1.7°C rise in sea-surface temperature is projected for later this century. These figures sound small but in fact, when the ocean warms by half a degree Celsius, wind speeds increase by 3%. This will continue and accelerate, with huge losses in human life, especially in coastal areas. In 2004 hurricanes killed 60 people in the US and caused \$45 billion of damage. It was already well known that New Orleans is one of the most vulnerable places on earth to the effects of global warming.

Although there have been fewer hurricanes and tropical cyclones worldwide over the past decade, the North Atlantic has averaged eight to nine hurricanes each year, compared to six to seven for the decade before. Category 4 and 5 hurricanes in the North Atlantic have increased at a faster than average rate: by 56% between 1975 and 2004. What is more, although there are fewer hurricanes today than a decade ago, now they are significantly stronger and

more destructive. It may be no coincidence that sea surface temperatures have risen the most in this period.

In the wake of Katrina a debate is taking place among US scientists about the effect of global warming. The section of the US ruling class that plays down or even denies the role of global warming is losing its credibility. This was highlighted when Kerry Emmanuel, a scientist from Massachusetts who was a leader of the climate change sceptics, switched sides in the debate and publicly recognised the manmade damage already being done. A number of prominent scientists are asserting that global warming has probably already made hurricanes more severe. Kevin Trenberth of the National Center for Atmospheric Research has said that 'to unequivocally state that global warming has nothing to do with what's going on in Katrina, is totally irresponsible in my view.' Neither side, however, sees the solution to the problem. Both receive government funding in one way or another and so they ignore the cause of global warming and environmental destruction: capitalism and imperialism. This is the enemy we need to fight if we are to prevent more and worse catastrophes.

Louis Brehony

* Hurricane strength is measured from 1-5, with 5 being the strongest.

HURRICANE RITA

As we go to press, the destruction caused by Hurricane Rita was much less than expected, although Texan oil installations have suffered considerable damage. At one stage a Category 5 hurricane, by the time it hit land in eastern Texas and western Louisiana it had moderated to Category 2. The relief effort is now being focused on redeeming Bush's plummeting polling ratings and federal agencies are pulling out all the stops. After the Katrina disaster, the local population took no chances. Two million people fled the affected areas in advance, causing 100-mile long traffic jams. The evacuation of Houston was a fiasco: cars ran out of petrol – and so did the petrol stations. More than 20 pensioners died when a bus exploded on the freeway: the stop-start traffic overheated the brakes which caught fire, and, in turn, ignited the patients' oxygen tanks. They were the first casualties of the evacuation effort, where the state throws responsibility on to individuals to organise their own escape. The return will no doubt be equally chaotic.

World Youth Festival:

SOLO EN EL SOCIALISMO OTRO MUNDO ES POSIBLE

6 FESTIVAL MUNDIAL DE LA JUVENTUD

¡LUCHAMOS CONTRA EL IMPERIALISMO!

YOUTH OF THE WORLD, UNITE FOR PEACE AND SOLIDARITY, IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST IMPERIALISM

¡Por La Lucharemos

FRENTE FRANCISCO DE MIRANDA

Luchadores Sociales Bolivarianos

AL 16° FESTIVAL MUNDIAL DE

Between 7 and 15 August, the Revolutionary Communist Group joined more than 17,000 delegates from 144 countries for the 16th World Festival of Youth and Students in Caracas, Venezuela under the slogan 'for peace and solidarity, we struggle against imperialism and war'. HELEN YAFFE reports.

The Festival is organised by the World Federation of Democratic Youth and first took place in July 1947, when 17,000 youth from 71 countries met in post-war Prague, after two imperialist world wars within one generation, raising the slogan 'youth, unite in the struggle for a stable and durable peace'. The Festival adopted an anti-imperialist line in Cuba in 1978.

After the collapse of the Soviet bloc 1989-91, the Festival was successfully revived in Cuba in 1997, despite the Miami-based terrorists' attack (see FRFI 139). The period leading up to the Festival in Algeria 2001 saw the ascendancy of social-democracy. In Britain New Labour chirped on about the 'third way' and throughout Europe and Latin America social democratic governments reconciled themselves with global capitalism while revolutionary movements suffered defeats throughout the world. Only after a political battle within the international organising committee did the Festival again adopt an anti-imperialist stance as 6,500 youth from 110 countries met in Algeria.

Then in September 2001, just weeks after the Festival, the US came under attack from reactionary terrorist forces it had helped to create. Imperialism increased its offensive, especially in Afghanistan and Iraq. In response to that offensive and the total failure of neo-liberal globalisation for the oppressed majority, anti-imperialist forces grew. How quickly the world can change.

The 16th World Festival of Youth and Students took place in a principal battle ground between imperialism and the oppressed. Since Hugo Chavez was elected President in 1998 he has clawed back power from the ruling class, which is linked to US capital, gradually socialising the means of production and redistributing oil wealth for social investment in a country where 80% of the population lives in poverty. 14 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Chavez has declared that the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela will take a socialist path.

The themes for discussion at the Festival were: 1) peace, war and imperialism; 2) education, science, culture, communication and technology; 3) employment, economy and development; and 4) democracy, liberty, national sovereignty and human rights. A day was dedicated to each continent, and meetings organised for social sectors including: young workers and trade unionists, entrepreneurs, indigenous, religious, journalists, immigrants, disabled people, athletes, and parliamentarians.

Every national delegation could organise meetings for inclusion in the official programme. There were meetings about countries engaged in anti-imperialist struggle, for example; the Basque Country, Western Sahara, Palestine and North Korea, and countries where revolutionary movements are challenging state power, such as Bolivia and Nepal.

The British delegation

Contrast this revolutionary backdrop with the Alice-in-Wonderland British delegation. Officially with 97 delegates, of whom just one third joined the contingent at the inauguration march. The group around the British national committee was dominated by young representatives from the Labour Party and social-democratic groups linked to it. Representatives and apologists of an imperialist Labour Party, a government illegally occupying Iraq, attending an anti-imperialist Festival!

The British national committee organised two workshops; on trade unionism and on British imperialism. The RCG delegates participated in the workshops, confronting our compatriots about the racist and imperialist history of the Labour Party, the lie of 'socialist' Old Labour, and the complicity of the trade union movement in the exploitation of the oppressed world. We argued for a complete break with Labour in order to build a real movement against war, racism, capitalism, imperialism, and to truly defend the working class and oppressed.

In revolutionary Latin America, we were among a radicalising majority and our contributions were received with respect and solidarity from anti-imperialists around the world, pleased to hear the voice of genuine socialists from the oldest imperialist country in the world.

Revolutionary youth of Venezuela

Throughout the event we were impressed with the political level of the young Venezuelan delegates and the hundreds of volunteers assisting at the Festival. The more than 3,000 Venezuelan delegates were chosen by their peers in workplaces, communities and social and political organisations. Their ranks included 90 youth from indigenous communities, 100 peasants, 500 from social programmes or missions established to tackle poverty, 150 cadets and soldiers and 20 disabled youth.

These Venezuelan youth are more than just 'Chavistas'—followers of the charismatic President. They were political cadre of the Revolution. They understand that Venezuela has embarked on a process of transition to socialism, and they recognise the intensity of class war this involves. They understand the need to foster popular participation in the Revolution, to arm the people with knowledge and guns to defend the basic welfare gains they have already received. One young volunteer announced that 'although this has been a peaceful Revolution so far, the people are armed and will defend it'.

Socialism for the 21st century

During a conference about the Bolivarian Revolution and the construction of socialism in the 21st century members of Chavez's govern-

Revolutionary slogans in Caracas

ment described the Revolution as at a juncture between two systems, in transition from capitalism to socialism and talked about creating the conditions for this advance. The speakers urged a return to the classic texts of Marx and Lenin and a re-examination of the Trotsky-Stalin polemic, a constructive assessment of the socialist countries and the need to build a humanitarian socialism, democratic and representative.

'Cuba, Venezuela, una sola bandera'

The British delegation had arrived in Caracas from Havana with 1,800 delegates from Cuba, including 500 international students who study for free on the island. At 1am in an airport in Caracas, we were welcomed with a party, Cuban and Venezuelan flags waved to the slogan *Cuba, Venezuela, una sola bandera* (Cuba, Venezuela, just one flag) chanted above the music.

Since October 2000 Cuba and Venezuela have had cooperation agreements and now operate under the Latin American Bolivarian Alternative (ALBA), which, among a complex of agreements, exchanges oil supplies for Cuba with the supply of thousands of Cuban medical personnel and educators for Venezuela (see FRFI 183). The concrete results of this co-operation are the social welfare projects: Operation Milagro (eye operations for Venezuelans to recover sight in Cuba), Barrio Adentro I & II (medical provision), Mission Robinson (basic literacy), Mission Rivas (secondary school education), Mission Sucre (university/professional education) among others.

Today Cuba has 25,845 health professionals assisting over 85 million people in 66 different countries. At the same time more than 12,000 foreign youth study medicine in Cuba for free. As well as resisting US imperialism for 46 years, Cuban socialism has presented a viable alternative model for the oppressed of the world. The respect and solidarity which Cuba has won was reflected whenever Cuba or Castro were mentioned at the festival. The Venezuelan President has promised to send Venezuelan troops to defend Cuba if the US attacks.

Chavez speaks to the youth of the world

RCG delegates had the privilege of hearing Chavez speak on three occasions during the Festival. First of these was at the inauguration event where Chavez marked the 60th anniversary of the 'greatest terrorist attack recorded in history, a true genocide committed by north American imperialism'—the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Echoing Castro, he warned the US that if they were crazy enough to think about



British delegates with young Venezuelan revolutionaries at the inauguration march

invading Venezuela, as they had Iraq and Afghanistan, 'we will make them bite the dust defending our country...we will start the war of 100 years and set fire to the continent. The people will break out everywhere ready to show imperialism that this century will be our century, that we are not prepared to live on our knees, that we demand to be free!' He concluded that 'the only way to remove capitalism is restoring, strengthening, opening and constructing the path to socialism of the 21st century, a true socialism... Down with capitalism! Down with imperialism! Long live socialism! Long live freedom!'

At the conference on socialism for the 21st century, Chavez called for a great debate, open and democratic, on socialist construction. He described how capitalism and imperialism are destroying the planet and the human race. A sombre silence descended over his audience as Chavez predicted that world might end in 50 years if we fail to overthrow the destructive capitalist system. Conveying a sense of urgency, he adopted a slogan from Frederick Engels and Rosa Luxemburg: 'Socialism or Barbarism!'

Chavez was the final witness at the two-day Anti-Imperialist Court which heard testimony from around the world, including:

- Vietnam, about the devastation caused by US use of agent orange. We saw images of children still being born with horrendous deformities;
- Palestine, about both life under occupation and life for the seven million Palestinian refugees;
- Mexico, about migrants who die or are murdered attempting to enter the US and about slave labour and incarceration once there;
- Brazil, about the struggle of the landless;
- The US, about youngsters sent to die as cannon fodder in an illegal and unjust war in Iraq;
- Cuba, about the actions of terrorist organisations in Miami, and the US government complicity, a testimony given by a Cuban government agent who worked under cover for 22 years.

Chavez opened his testimony with the accusation that 'Mister Danger',

as he calls US President Bush, and his government, would attempt to assassinate him. He detailed the new fraternal trade deals made as part of Mercosur (South American market), Petrosur (South American petrol agreements) and Telesur (South American television channel), all of which undermine the domination of US capital and its ability to exploit the people of southern America. He threatened to end Venezuela's oil exports to the US, stating that retail prices would double as a result. But he declared to the 700 US delegates at the Festival that any progressive group or social organisation could purchase refined oil direct from the Venezuelan government at half the market price.

Retelling an anecdote about how Che Guevara accidentally volunteered to be President of the National Bank, Chavez asked whether there were any young communists in the audience, to which 90% jumped up cheering 'joven comunista, marxista-leninista' (young communist, Marxist-Leninist). He concluded his speech and closed the Festival by again borrowing the words of Castro, 'condemn us, it does not matter, history will absolve us!'

Death threat against Chavez

A week after the World Youth Festival the US's leading TV evangelist Pat Robertson called for 'some of the covert operatives' in the US to assassinate the Venezuelan President because it was 'a whole lot cheaper than starting a war.' Robertson, a Christian fundamentalist and ardent supporter of President George Bush, called Venezuela 'a launching pad for communist infiltration and Islamic extremism'. US Secretary of Defense responded to international outrage with a pathetic reassurance that: 'Our department doesn't do that kind of thing. It's against the law.' This senile old fascist should be imprisoned for promoting terrorism, along with Bush, Blair and the rest of the imperialist warmongering thieves.

In brief...

2005 Brigade to Cuba: Inspired by the Battle of Ideas

A model for surviving hurricanes

Within hours of Hurricane Katrina hitting the southern United States, Cuba offered to send immediately 100 medical specialists each carrying 24 kilos of emergency medicines and diagnostic equipment, followed within two days by 1,100 doctors, medicines, diagnostic teams and three field hospitals.

Cuba itself bears the brunt of several hurricanes every year. The last ten years have seen some of the worst hurricanes on record, yet loss of life in Cuba is always very low. Often no deaths occur at all. Certainly, the tragic deaths, chaos and suffering the US witnessed in the wake of Hurricane Katrina would never be allowed to happen in Cuba. No one would be abandoned the way that poor black and white working class people were in the US. Cuba has been cited by the United Nations International Secretariat for Disaster Reduction as a model for hurricane preparation.

In July, 1.7 million Cubans were evacuated from the path of Hurricane Dennis within 24 hours. Everyone in Cuba knows where to go and what to do in an emergency. Everyone is warned when an emergency is on the way and again when evacuation is to take place. If necessary, neighbourhood teams convey the messages door to door. National leaders take control and go on television to give updated information. People are evacuated to medically-equipped shelters. Family doctors evacuate with their neighbours. Animals are also evacuated. Even important items such as fridges and TV sets are taken. It would be inconceivable for Cubans to be stuck in a sports stadium without food or water.

In the US, money is thrown at a problem after the event. They have little social capital. In socialist Cuba the safety of the people is paramount and they work together to prepare for and try to prevent catastrophe before it happens.

Victory for the Cuban 5

On 9 August a Federal Appeals Court in Atlanta, USA, unanimously overturned the convictions of the Cuban 5 (previously referred to as the Miami 5) and ordered a retrial. It ruled that the five Cubans, arrested in September 1998 and convicted on trumped-up charges of espionage, had not received a fair trial due to local prejudice and hostility in Miami, where the original trial was held, and hostile publicity. A few days before the ruling, a UN committee found that the arrest and legal procedures concerning the Cuban 5 had been arbitrary and contrary to the law. It has also emerged that the local FBI and associates of the Miami mafia lied to the Attorney General to allow the original trial to proceed. The US government has until 29 September to decide whether to appeal against the Appeals Court ruling. The five men, whose real activities were to infiltrate and report on the activities of anti-Cuban terrorist groups active in Miami, were given sentences ranging from 15 years to double life plus 15 years. They have spent many months in solitary confinement. They should be released immediately.

Posada Carriles: the sordid tale continues

Posada Carriles, the anti-Cuban terrorist currently on bail in the US, has withdrawn his application for political asylum. He has clearly calculated that the US administration will not dare prosecute him for his many acts of sabotage, bombing and murder directed against the Cuban Revolution and is ready to cut a deal. As his attorney warned: 'He knows a lot...and if he talks it could hurt the FBI, the CIA and the government in general'. A new hearing over his immigration status will begin on 26 September.

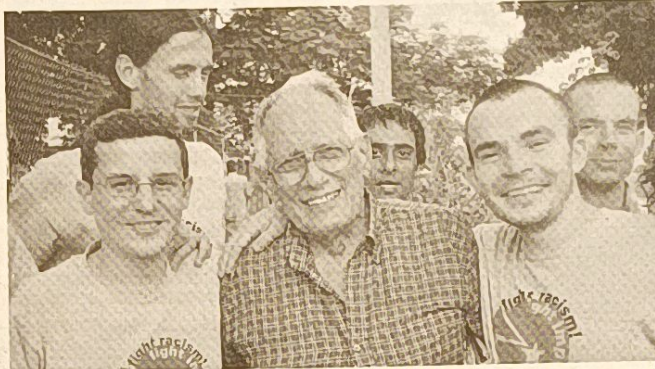
The brigade that marked the tenth anniversary of Rock around the Blockade's work in solidarity with Cuba returned in August from two weeks in Havana and Guantanamo invigorated by the experience. Brigadistas who had taken part in our previous brigade to Cuba in 2003 reported sensing a sea change in the political climate, a society once again brimming over with revolutionary enthusiasm and consciousness at every level, a sense of a people – and particularly a youth – actively engaged in the building of socialist society. The Battle of Ideas is bearing fruit.

This was the main theme of all our discussions with communists in Guantanamo and Havana. The Battle of Ideas, launched in 2000, was born out of the upsurge of popular mobilisation in Cuba to demand the return of the child, Elian Gonzalez, held by relatives in Miami, to his father in Cuba. It is an ideological battle being fought on every front – the cultural, political, educational and social – to reclaim every Cuban for the Revolution.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, coupled with an ever-tightening US blockade, propelled Cuba into the devastating economic crisis known as the Special Period. As a small, isolated and underdeveloped socialist island suddenly exposed to the harsh realities of the world market, Cuba's survival depended on making a number of concessions to capitalism. These included encouraging tourism via joint ventures with capitalist companies, legalising dollars and allowing the growth of small private enterprise. The Cuban Communist Party recognised that these steps were setbacks for socialism and would, inevitably, have social consequences as growing inequality and private enrichment led to the sapping of a collective spirit, growing materialist self-interest, individualism and alienation. The Battle of Ideas is all about combating those tendencies. Evaristo Sierra, a leading UJC [Union of Young Communists] member in Guantanamo, explained: 'In the 1990s we had to open ourselves up to dollars...Foreign investment and tourism had negative consequences. We were looking for solutions. Prostitution and other evils emerged. We have had to work with young people to educate and re-educate'.

The Cubans know the ideological battle has to be fought, first and foremost, on a concrete terrain. In 2000, they set about assessing the scale of the problem, with 6,000 students, on a voluntary basis, visiting nearly 60,000 homes, particularly in the poor and overcrowded areas most affected by the rigours of the Special Period. As a result a whole raft of programmes was set up, the most important of which has been the training of thousands of social workers to work with the most disadvantaged and alienated sections of society, reintegrating them into the Revolution. Yasmin, the Provincial Director of the Social Work Programme in Guantanamo, told us: 'The programme started after our community initiated door-to-door visits for all the population. They found some people and families who were isolated despite the Revolution, due to the Special Period, and the social work programme emerged'.

A crucial sector was what the Cubans refer to as the 'lost youth', young people neither studying nor in work, disaffected, drifting and drawn to petty crime and anti-social behaviour – a main target for the UJC, social workers and educationalists. In sharp contrast to the Labour government's hostile and punitive attitude towards youth in Britain, the Cuban approach is marked by a real sense of empathy and support in resolving the problems that face young people and their families. On one level, there has been a major effort to increase enrolment in



Brigadistas with Angel Arcos, comrade and close friend of Che Guevara in the early years of the Revolution

higher education, establishing local university study centres and introducing programmes for those who have failed entrance exams to enter higher education through more practically-based routes, working alongside teachers or social workers. At another, social workers work intensively with prisoners, particularly the young, with one social worker to every ten prisoners, ensuring they have the opportunity to attend university or technical schools and helping smooth their reintegration into the community at the end of their sentences. The Second Secretary of the UJC in Guantanamo, Enemis, stressed: 'There will always be some who get confused and allow themselves to be misled, a minority. The UJC works with these people. We never reject anyone'. The sound system donated by the brigade to the UJC in the town of Caimanera – economically blighted by its proximity to the US base and concentration camp at Guantanamo – will allow the UJC to extend its work with young people in one of the poorest and most deprived areas of Cuba.

We also met social workers dedicated to work with the disabled, the elderly, the mentally ill and all those who could find themselves marginalised – again, with the aim of improving people's lives and so giving them a real stake in the Revolution.

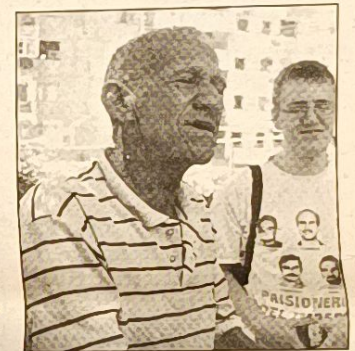


Brigadistas with UJC comrades in Guantanamo

As ever, it was inspiring to meet with Kenia Serrano, head of International Affairs at the UJC, who took part in the Rock around the Blockade speaking tour of Britain in 2002. Kenia described this generation's involvement in Venezuela being the equivalent of the internationalism of those who fought in Angola. Throughout our stay we encountered large delegations of young people working flat out in preparation for the World Youth Festival in Venezuela.

Other highlights of the brigade included meeting relatives of the Cuban [Miami] 5 and hearing Fidel Castro speak on the anniversary of the 26 July Moncada attack at the Karl Marx theatre in Havana.

Cuba's example, its ability to learn from the past and go forward, to fight to deepen and extend socialism through the Battle of Ideas, will continue to inspire our work here in Britain. We would like to thank the National UJC in Havana, and in par-



Brigadistas met a group of veterans who had fought in the Angolan war against invading South African and US-backed armies

ticular our guide Yenielis, who accompanied us, translated for us and answered our questions 24 hours a day; the UJC in Guantanamo; the staff of the Fine Art School in Guantanamo, where we stayed, and all those who made our many visits and meetings so interesting and inspiring. Rock around the Blockade would also like to thank all those who contributed in various ways over the last 18 months to the fundraising and political work that made the brigade, and the donation of a sound system to support the UJC's work with the youth, possible.

IRELAND: imperialism and national revolution

How the Trotskyists got it wrong

Ireland: Republicanism and Revolution
by Alan Woods,
Wellred Books,
May 2005,
135 pages, £6.99

Why review a book on Irish republicanism written by a long-standing member of the bloody, racist, imperialist British Labour Party? Because socialists need to understand the significance of the revolutionary national class struggle against imperialism and for socialism, particularly with developments in Latin America. Woods' analysis of Irish republicanism totally fails in this respect. Indeed, his book is an example of a trend which Lenin called imperialist economism, and which today expresses the interests of a narrow section of the working class – the labour aristocracy.

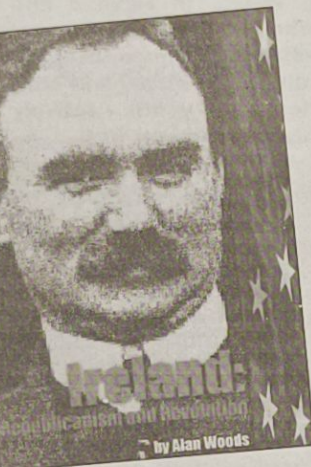
Woods says that 'the only way to solve what remains (sic) of Ireland's national problem is as a by-product of the revolutionary struggle for socialism.' (p127) He continues: 'There can be no reunification of Ireland while the working class remains divided along sectarian lines' (ibid). He concludes that 'It is time to put an end to the sectarian divisions that have bedevilled the working class of the North of Ireland for so long' (p129). This will be achieved by fighting 'on issues that unite working people, not those that divide us' (p130). But these fine words are really no more than idealist drivel which in the end capitulates to imperialism.

Lenin and imperialist economism

Lenin had to deal with a number of trends during the First Imperialist War to re-establish the principled position on the struggle for national self-determination, amongst them the imperialist economists. Lenin described 'the same economist refusal to see and pose political questions', continuing 'Since socialism creates the economic basis for the abolition of national oppression in the political sphere, therefore our author refuses to formulate our political tasks in this sphere (Lenin, *Collected Works* Vol 23 p 16). In particular, imperialist economists disagreed with the right of oppressed nations to self-determination because, they argued, it would mean capitulating to the nationalist bourgeoisie. This is exactly Woods' argument. He is of course against national oppression. But he does not translate this into any concrete political tasks. Instead he says, in relation to partition:

'The border is of course an abomination that must be removed. It is not, however, the task of socialists to erect new frontiers. Our aim is altogether different: our aim is to abolish all frontiers, not just the one that separates the South from the North. We stand for a socialist revolution in the North and South of Ireland, and a socialist revolution in Britain and the rest of Europe.' (Woods p132)

What follows from this? Frontiers, including the one that separates North and South, can only be abolished by socialist revolution. Therefore the issue of frontiers (ie self-determination) should not be posed as a concrete question today because it cannot be resolved under capitalism. Hence his utterly one-sided view that 'The whole history of the national liberation struggle in the 20th century shows...that



the achievement of formal independence on a capitalist basis has solved nothing' (p131).

Woods never differentiates between the tasks facing the working class of oppressor and oppressed nations. He rejects Lenin's clear exposition of the two-fold character of the struggle of the working class against national oppression:

'(a) first, it is the "action" of the nationally oppressed proletariat and peasantry jointly with the nationally oppressed bourgeoisie against the oppressor nation; (b) second, it is the "action" of the proletariat, or of its class-conscious section, in the oppressor nation against the bourgeoisie of that nation and all the elements that follow it'. (Lenin: 'A caricature of Marxism and imperialist economism', *Collected Works* Vol 23 p62)

Lenin's position was clear: socialists in imperialist nations must support the right of oppressed nations to self-determination down to an uprising or war. Does Woods agree with this? You cannot find out from his book.

Lenin argued that imperialist economism had both a left and a right face. Woods presents the right face: for him anyone who engages in struggles for national independence is by definition subordinating the interests of the working class to those of the national bourgeoisie. Hence they must be opposed and condemned. In the case of Ireland, this means attacking the IRA. Woods justifies his position by distorting Marx, Engels, Lenin and Connolly.



Marx and Engels

Woods provides a very selective account of Marx and Engels' position on the struggle of the Fenians in the 1860s, one which depends almost entirely on their private assessment of Fenian tactics (p34). He does not mention their intensive public campaigning in support of Fenian prisoners, nor their challenge to English working class

leaders in the First International. Marx and Engels were indeed at times very scathing about the Fenians – but only in their private correspondence. In public they fought Woods' equivalents in the ranks of the English trade union movement. Their supporter Dupont argued in the International against those he called 'English would-be liberators' who argued that 'Fenianism is not altogether wrong' but asked why they did not employ 'legal means of meetings and demonstrations.' He continued:

'What is the use of talking of legal means to a people reduced to the lowest state of misery from century to century by English oppression...Is it well for

for national revolution has disappeared even in backward Ireland... The experiment of an Irish national rebellion...is over. But the historical role of the Irish proletariat is only beginning. Already it has brought into the revolt, even though under an archaic flag, its class indignation against militarism and imperialism.'

Lenin replied:

'To imagine that social revolution is conceivable without revolts by small nations in the colonies and in Europe, without the revolutionary outbursts by a section of the petty bourgeoisie with all its prejudices, without a movement of politically non-conscious proletar-



the English to talk of legality and justice to those who on the slightest suspicion of Fenianism are arrested and incarcerated, and subjected to physical and mental tortures?...The English working men who blame the Fenians commit more than a fault, for the case of both peoples is the same; they have the same enemy to defeat.' (Marx and Engels on Ireland p486-7)

Lenin, Connolly and Trotsky

Although Woods seeks justification for his position in Lenin and Connolly, as an imperialist economist he feels much more at home with Trotsky's generalisations. Lenin, however, never adopted Trotsky's perspective; to think that he did would be to ignore his contribution to the debate on self-determination at the Second Congress of the Third International where he pointed to the

ian and semi-proletarian masses against oppression by the landowners, the church, and the monarchy against national oppression etc – to imagine all this is to repudiate social revolution. So one army lines up in one place and says 'We are for socialism', and another, somewhere else and says, 'We are for imperialism', and that will be a social revolution!' (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 22 pp355-56)

Nor was Connolly a Trotskyist. He could not have made himself plainer when he asked a few weeks before the Rising: 'Is it not well and fitting that we of the working class should fight for the freedom of the nation from foreign rule, as the first requisite for the free development of the national powers needed for our class? It is so fitting' (cited in Reed, *Ireland: The key to the British Revolution* p25). You would not know this from reading Woods.

The split in the working class

Woods constantly seeks to minimise the significance of the split in the working class in the occupied Six Counties. Every time he is forced to concede that discrimination against Catholic workers in the North exists, Woods tries to belittle its significance by saying that conditions for Protestants are also bad (eg p70, pp80-81). But that is not what is at issue. The split in the working class is not merely ideological, as he tries to suggest, but has a material basis in British imperialist domination, and Connolly understood its significance when he observed that:

'...the Orange working class are slaves in spirit because they have been reared up amongst people whose conditions of servitude were more slavish than their own. In Catholic Ireland the working class are rebels in spirit and democratic in feeling because for hundreds of years they have found no class as lowly paid or as hardly treated as themselves.'

He concluded that:

'...the doctrine that because the workers of Belfast live under the same industrial conditions as do those of Great Britain, they are therefore subject to the same passions and to be influenced by the same methods of propaganda, is a doctrine almost screamingly funny in its absurdity'

Yet it is this doctrine Woods wants the Irish movement to pursue: 'A programme based on issues that can unite the class: jobs, wages, conditions, housing, women's rights – only the struggle for this can succeed where all else has failed' (Woods, p126). Connolly may not have used the term 'imperialist economism', but this is what he was dealing with – the Woods of his day.

1969 and the introduction of British troops

On this subject, Woods just lies. He states that the Marxists in the Labour Party 'came down firmly against the sending of the troops to the North. They wrote at the time: "The call made for the entry of British troops will turn to vinegar in the mouths of some of the civil rights leaders. The troops have been sent in to impose a solution in the interests of British and Ulster big business"' (p110). But he omits to mention that the self-same article in *Militant* of September 1969 also says:

'A slaughter would have followed in comparison with which the blood-letting in Belfast would have paled into insignificance if the Labour Government had not intervened with British troops.' (cited in Reed p177)

So the 'Marxists' were not against the introduction of troops at all! Indeed, ten years later, they were describing those who called for the withdrawal of British troops as 'attorneys for the Provos' (*Bulletin*, November/December 1979). Needless to say, Woods makes no reference to this either.

Out of countless examples of Woods' capitulation to imperialism, we will take just one. His account of the struggle of the 1970s against the criminalisation of Republican prisoners ignores the crucial role of the 1974-79 Labour government in establishing a regime of institutionalised torture and repression. Although he now seems to endorse the struggle led by the Relatives Action Committees (RACs) in support of the prisoners it was a quite different story at the time.

In October 1979, *Militant* issued a virulent condemnation of the Mountbatten and Warrenpoint bombings entitled 'Mass action not individual terror', saying that: 'Above all these events have, very temporarily, stunned the rising movement of the working class just at a time when the attention of all workers needs to be focused on opposition to the policies of the Tory government.'

The article is silent on the prisoners' struggle let alone the role of the RACs.

Woods' arguments express the interests of a privileged section of the working class, the labour aristocracy. His defence of the Labour Party, his opposition to armed resistance to the British occupation, his re-writing of the shameful history of his organisation, his misuse of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Connolly all have a purpose: to keep opposition to British imperialism within the confines of bourgeois respectability. Together they amount to a deeply reactionary standpoint.

Robert Clough

Repression in Scottish prisons

INSIDE
NEWS

In June this year over 70 prisoners at Saughton prison in Edinburgh went on hunger strike over the disgusting quality of the prison food and increased repression at the gaol, which recently opened a massive new 'superwing', purpose-built to hold long-term prisoners.

This was the latest manifestation of unrest at Saughton since the appointment 18 months ago of David Croft as governor. Croft, an ex-Saughton screw, was at Shotts prison in Lanarkshire at the time of the uprising five years ago and is still remembered by prisoners there with bitterness. Since taking over at Saughton he has systematically screwed down the regime and encouraged his staff to harass prisoners, especially lifers and long-termers.

In June Croft hurried up the completion of a new purpose-built top security wing, Ingliston House, officially intended as a long term facility for freshly sentenced prisoners. He decided, however that the first group to move into the new fortress-type wing would be 60 life-sentence prisoners approaching the end of their sentences and normally eligible for semi-open or open prisons. Saughton had previously held such lifers in a relaxed and semi-open facility, from where they were allowed to go out each day to work in the outside community as a crucial part of their reintroduction into

society. Croft now moved them en masse to the new wing and shut them behind steel gates, electronic doors and reinforced cells, constantly observed by CCTV cameras. Men who, in some cases, had served decades in prison and were approaching freedom were now arbitrarily returned to maximum security conditions, in clear breach of the Scottish Prison Service's official position on rehabilitation.

Ingliston House itself is a massive complex of separate self-contained wings or units, all operating 'incentive-based' regimes of varying severity, based on crude behaviour modification principles and straightforward blackmail. Costing tens of millions of pounds to construct and equip, it is an architectural blueprint for prison repression in the future, and is clearly inspired by US methods of control and containment.

The second group of prisoners moved into Ingliston House were freshly sentenced long-termers, who previously would have been transferred to proper long-term prisons (Saughton remains essentially a local

remand jail) with more appropriate regimes. Now they are expected to serve the whole of their sentences in the austere and virtual lockdown conditions prevailing in Ingliston House; in some cases this will be for 10, 15 or 20 years. Inevitably, it was this group of prisoners who began challenging the regime early on and within a week the screws trying to enforce it began to lose control. As always, when confronted by the spectre of prisoner solidarity, the administration began increasing lockdown periods and strictly segregating groups of prisoners during exercise periods. Initially all prisoners in the facility had shared exercise periods, although they were confined to separate pens or cages; however two days after arriving at Ingliston House, prisoners pushed their way as one mass group into a single cage and defied the screws to separate or remove them. Containment of resistance, as opposed to futile attempts to break it, now characterises the regime, and inevitably the tension continues to rise.

Tony Cameron, the head of the Scottish Prison Service (SPS), toured

Ingliston House in the week that it opened and responded to prisoners' complaints with indifference and sarcasm. This speaks volumes about his lack of concern for either the psychological health of prisoners or the well-being of his staff should the place erupt into riot. Cameron's department has spent millions on creating what is in effect a huge high-tech control unit at Saughton, yet he resisted vigorously the court ruling ordering them to comply with human rights law by providing in-cell sanitation at prisons such as Barlinnie. Cameron's priorities are obvious.

There will be significant unrest at Saughton unless David Croft is reined in by the SPS and long-term prisoners are treated with proper regard for their human rights. Unfortunately the official mentality is probably best summed up by the remark of one screw at Saughton who, when confronted with a warning of trouble from a prisoner, said 'At the end of the day, we're the biggest gang in here so we will always win.'

How many times will the lesson have to be learnt by those who attempt to crush and subdue us that when prisoners rise up collectively in defence of our rights, no amount of violence and repression is capable of halting us?

John Bowden, HMP Saughton

Overcrowding

On 9 September the prison population of England and Wales stood at 76,934. In August a report from the Prison Reform Trust had already warned that the system was dangerously overcrowded, with over half of prisons over capacity, and 10,000 more people in the prison system than it was designed to hold.

In July the Home Office was forced to withdraw its long-term prison population projections – released in January – as the population had climbed to 2,000 over the highest predicted scenario in only six months. The new projection foresees the prison population reaching 90,000 by 2010.

Harmondsworth

On 10 August the trial of seven men accused of riot and violent disorder at Harmondsworth Removal Centre in July 2004 ended with three acquittals and four convictions. The uprising occurred following the death of detainee Sergey Baranuyck, who was facing imminent removal to the Ukraine.

Those found guilty were Andrew Walters, Give Okropiridze, Albert Atkinson and Rayon Oates. They were sentenced to between three and four and a half years' imprisonment each. FRFI sends them our solidarity and best wishes.

Lincoln mutineers

We would also like to belatedly send solidarity greetings to all those convicted in January this year of participating in the 2002 uprising at Lincoln prison. Twenty-one prisoners received sentences for their involvement in the Lincoln protest, with six men (Alan Brown, Gavin Collins, Michael Westwood, Benjamin Daws, John Lambert and Lee McGrath) receiving nine-year sentences. FRFI would like to hear from any of those convicted about their experiences at Lincoln and their treatment since.

Censorship of FRFI

Following Iñigo Makazaga's victory against the Prison Service's attempts to prevent FRFI reaching prisoners in high security prisons, we have been contacted by a number of prisoners who have experienced further problems. Subscribers to the paper in Nottingham, Birmingham, Parc and Frankland prisons have reported repeated difficulties with censorship, the majority of which are ultimately resolved but which require repeated submission of complaints and letters from solicitors in order to remind the prisons that they have a duty to comply with the European Convention on Human Rights, and in particular with Article 10 (Freedom of Expression). We will continue to oppose each and every instance in which our paper is censored.

G8 defendants

Over 700 protesters were arrested at the G8 summit in July, with 366 being charged. All those held in prison on remand have now been released and trials are now beginning in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Stirling, Perth and Falkirk, although sheriffs have been using powers to ban supporters from the public galleries of courts. Legal and material support is being organised by the July 2005 Solidarity Group, c/o 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh EH7 5HA; 0131 557 6242; e-mail July2005solidarity@yahoo.co.uk

REVIEW

■ If it was easy they wouldn't call it 'struggle' by Mark Barnsley

This pamphlet is a translation of a speech made by Mark Barnsley to a prison support group in France in 2004. Mark served eight years of a 12-year sentence, having been wrongly convicted of two counts of grievous bodily harm in an incident in which he was not only not the aggressor but was in fact the victim of an attack perpetrated by 15 drunken students. Accounts of Mark's conviction and struggle to clear his name are available from the campaign address; however this pamphlet deals not with why he was in prison but with how he survived and fought his incarceration.

This is a concise but very moving, highly political and sometimes funny account of prison life and ways in which solidarity and resistance can be engendered. At a time when prisoners have been systematically divided against one another by incentive and privilege schemes, the possibility of parole and the widespread encouragement of heroin use, it is extremely refreshing to read this pamphlet, which includes many examples of prisoners fighting back against the system, from tiny acts of resistance and sabotage to the full scale uprising that took place at Full Sutton prison in 1997.

Copies available from Justice for Mark Barnsley, PO Box 381, Huddersfield HD1 3XX price £2.50, free to prisoners.

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Admission free or donation
www.alternatives2prison.uk.com



FRFI supporters joined a three-hour demonstration outside Durham prison on 31 August 2005 in response to the death of 20-year-old Louise Giles ten days earlier. Four prison vans were stopped as they brought prisoners to the gaol and a letter handed in to the governor. Durham prison's women's wing was heavily criticised by the Chief Inspector of Prisons in 2004 and had been expected to close following the report. Pauline Campbell, who organised the protest, and whose own daughter Sarah died in Styal prison, read out a statement to the press, pointing out that 'Ms Giles was owed a legal duty of care, and prisons cannot continue to be used as dumping grounds for mentally ill people... They have become a public disgrace. On average, two people per week take their own lives in prisons in England and Wales'.

Solidarity with political prisoners

On 8 August, Marcos Martin Ponce, a political prisoner and member of the GRAPO (First of October Anti-Fascist Resistance Groups) organisation was brutally beaten in Fleury Merogis Prison for refusing to comply with his degrading treatment by the French guards. This occurred as he was being taken to a court hearing in which the Spanish government were applying for his extradition. Four officers pounced on him, and proceeded to kick and punch him until he fell to the ground. Then they kicked him in his legs and ribs.

This type of treatment is common towards political prisoners from

GRAPO, ETA (revolutionary Basque nationalists), and EGPGC (Galician independence movement). Marcos Martin Ponce says: 'I want the world to know that although they humiliate us, we are still here and standing firm, resisting. My revolutionary dignity is still intact, even stronger.'

Political prisoners are being dispersed away from their families and communities and can only communicate through letters, which often do not reach their destinations. Isolation is commonplace with 23-hour lockdown and no contact with other prisoners. If the extraditions of GRAPO prisoners from France to Spain are

approved, they can expect even harsher, more brutal treatment from the Spanish authorities.

Political prisoners in Spain have been routinely tortured by police officers and guards. This obviously has physical and mental consequences but the torturers act with impunity, knowing that there will be no comeback or outcry in the media. Despite this, the Spanish state has not been capable of eliminating the liberation struggle.

Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! stands firmly in solidarity with the political prisoners in French and Spanish gaols.

Scott McDonald

FRFI ROUNDUP

Out on the streets fighting imperialism and racism



Above: 24 September. The RCG, Kurdish, Turkish and other revolutionaries were part of the lively and militant Anti-Imperialist Bloc contingent on the 10,000-20,000 strong London demonstration which called for 'peace and liberty' in Iraq.

Day after day we see and read news that proves that capitalism isn't working, that it can't solve the problems that face the people of the world. The occupation of Iraq has made life worse for the mass of Iraqi people. The Zionist withdrawal from Gaza has gone hand in hand with an extension of their settlement of the West Bank. The response to Hurricane Katrina showed that the world's richest nation could not and would not protect the poorest sections of the population. In Britain, the educational system remains riddled with inequality and the NHS is being slowly privatised. Now is the time for socialists and anti-imperialists to be out on the streets, campaigning for the socialist alternative, and that is where FRFI supporters have been.

In London, the weekly pickets of Marks and Spencer in Oxford Street have continued to get a very positive response from the public, in the face of two years of organised Zionist opposition. Regular pickets are also taking place in Rochdale and Newcastle, where they have been joined by local members of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

Supporters have also brought opposition to the occupation of Iraq to the streets of cities in England and Scotland. In London, Manchester and Newcastle street meetings have made the link between the occu-

pation of Iraq and the attack on democratic rights in Britain, exposing the Labour government's intention to impose an ever more repressive and racist regime in this country. More recently they have made the link between the onslaught on the Iraqi people and the US government's racist contempt for the lives of the poor black people in New Orleans.

In Glasgow, comrades worked with Action Against War (AAW) to organise a successful day of action on 24 September. The SSP/SWP, having demobilised opposition to the occupation, refused to support it and instead urged their supporters to go on a 400-mile trip to London. SWP members said that those who were trying to organise an event in Scotland for Scottish people were splitting the movement, and threatened AAW supporters with violence. However, this did not stop mobilisation from taking place to ensure that people in Scotland did not have to travel to the south of England to make their protest. Comrades in England meanwhile mobilised to ensure that a real anti-imperialist voice was heard on the London march.

In August, two members of the RCG went to Venezuela to take part in the World Festival for Youth and Students (see page 10). This is all part of a process of developing links with other socialist and anti-imperialist organisations in other countries. As members of a communist organisation in the heart of the oldest imperialist country in the world, we relished an atmosphere where communist, anti-imperialist sentiment was the dominant feature, rather than the stale Labourism of the left in Britain.

FRFI student supporters organised stalls at Freshers Fayres as the academic year began. There has been solid support for FRFI societies at: in Scotland, Glasgow, Strathclyde and Caledonian Universities and Glasgow Art College; in England, at Durham, Newcastle, Northumbria, Salford and Sheffield Universities in the north, and at King's College, LSE and SOAS in London.

The vibrant anti-war movement which existed before the invasion of Iraq has now all but disappeared. The FRFI societies will be taking up the task of rebuilding this movement and creating a genuinely anti-imperialist coalition of students against imperialism and repression in Britain. All other progressive student societies will be invited to co-ordinate campaigns under the umbrella of the Student Anti-Imperialist Network (SAIN).

The Network's first conference will be on 29 October in Newcastle. FRFI societies will be arguing that its platform should include:

- Opposition to the imperialist occupation of Iraq;
- Support for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination;
- Opposition to racist attacks in Britain and defence of all immigrants and asylum seekers;
- Defence of democratic rights against the increasingly repressive standpoint of the

Labour government;

- Support for socialist Cuba and revolutionary Latin America.

The network will be completely independent of Labour and its apologists. It will therefore pose a challenge to those on the left such as the SWP/Respect who place their alliance with the Labour left before the need to build a real movement.

Student readers from anywhere in the country are urged to contact us for more details, and to get active with us, giving a voice to the fight against racism and oppression, and supporting those fighting back against imperialism.

Right: 17 September. London RCG supporters in Brixton calling for the end of the occupation of Iraq

Below: London RCG and RATB supporters campaigning for the release of the Cuban (Miami) 5

Student Anti-Imperialist Network National Conference

Saturday 29 October 11am-5pm

Quaker Meeting House
1 Archbold Terrace
Newcastle upon Tyne
Tel 07813 073 846 for details



Events

LONDON

Every Thursday 6-8pm:
Picket of M&S, Oxford Street (Marble Arch end)

Every Saturday/Sunday 12-3pm
Street stalls. Call/email for details (see below)

Saturday 1 October, 1-3pm
Free the Miami 5 street stall, Portobello Road market W11 (nearest tube Ladbroke Grove)

Saturday 8 October, 12-5pm
On the 38th anniversary of Che Guevara's murder, an afternoon of debate and discussion on Cuba and Venezuela in the current world context. Organised by London School of Economics FRFI society, Room S75, St Clement's Building, LSE, Houghton Street, WC2 (nearest tube Holborn). Followed by march to Trafalgar Square

Saturday 8 October, 6-8pm
Demonstration to commemorate the legacy of Che Guevara and demand freedom for the Cuban 5. In front of National Gallery, Trafalgar Square.

Join the activities in London!
Call: 020 7837 1688.

email rcgfrfi@easynet.co.uk
or victoryintifada@hotmail.com
or office@ratb.org.uk
Write to BCM Box 5909,
London WC1N 3XX.

MIDLANDS

For information on activities email:
midlandsrcg@hotmail.com

NORTH WEST MANCHESTER

Saturday 1 October.

Assemble 12 noon

National demonstration:

Sukula family must stay

Lever Edge Lane, Bolton

Sunday 6 November, 2-5pm

Anti-Imperialist Forum, Cross Street Chapel, Cross Street

Manchester city centre

Saturday 12 November, 12-3pm

Picket of M&S, Market Street,

Manchester city centre.

Part of the International week of

Action Against the Apartheid Wall.

Saturday 15 October, 12-3pm

Hands off Cubal Stall, Market Street

Manchester city centre

ROCHDALE

Saturday 22 October, 12-3pm,

Picket of M&S.

Rochdale town centre

For more information or to get

active with Manchester RCG

email manchesterfrfi@revolutionary

communist.com
or victoryintifada@hotmail.com
or visit www.manchesterfrfi.su.com
for information on student activities
email: salfordfrfi@hotmail.com

NORTH EAST

NEWCASTLE

Saturday 15 October, 12pm

Picket of M&S, Northumberland

Street, Newcastle city centre

Wednesday 26 October, 7pm

Film Showing: Gaza Strip

Followed by speaker and discussion

The Slide Cinema, Newcastle

DURHAM

Wednesday 12 October, 7pm

Voices of revolutionary Cuba:

Brigade report back, followed by

social, Elvet Riverside,

Durham University

For more information on these

activities contact:

Call 07813 073 846

email frfi_northeast@yahoo.com or

vfrfi_northeast@hotmail.com

Monday 3 October, 7.30pm

Against war! Against imperialism!

SCOTLAND

Every Saturday, 12-2pm

Active Against the War Street

Stalls at Borders Bookshop,

Buchanan Street, Glasgow city centre

Organising meeting and discussion
Speakers from FRFI, Active Against
War. All welcome
Phoenix Bar, Great Western Street,
by Queen Street Station, Glasgow

Saturday Sunday 5/6 November.

12-4pm

Weekend of Action Against

Depleted Uranium

Borders Bookshop, Buchanan St.

Glasgow

Debate and discussion:

Voices from revolutionary Cuba

and Venezuela

Speakers from Rock around the

Blockade, Fight Racism! Fight

Imperialism!

Monday 17 October, 1pm

Level 8, Strathclyde University

Students Union, Glasgow

Monday 17 October, 5pm

Committee Room 1/2, Queen

Margaret Union, Glasgow University

Tuesday 18 October, 1pm

Braes Bar, Perth Rd, Dundee

Tuesday 18 October, 7.30pm

Room M104, George Moore Building,

Caledonian University, Glasgow

For details of FRFI activities in

Scotland:

Call: 07779 785 529

email: frfiscotland@yahoo.co.uk

For more information on anti-war

activities: Email:

active_against_war@yahoo.co.uk

A NIGHT OF Art, Music and Politics

Friday 14 October, 6pm to
midnight at

The Macbeth

70 Hoxton Street, London N1

Old Street tube - buses 271, 149, 43

Entrance £3

Live music, poetry, speeches,
DJs, dancing and more (all
performers welcome,
contact us in advance)

All money raised goes towards a
sound system for youth in Cuba

Rock around the Blockade:
office@ratb.org.uk

AMP: artmusicpolitic@gmail.com

CHOOSE THE RCG

If you believe that the treachery of the opportunist British labour and trade union movement must be challenged, then there is no alternative - Join the RCG!

I would like to join/receive more information about the RCG ☐

I would like to join an FRFI Readers & Supporters Group ☐

Name _____

Address _____

Tel _____

email _____

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Prisoner's appeal

Thank your for printing my appeal in the paper last month. I can only hope the piece elicits a better response than the one printed in *Inside Time*. I only received two replies and one of those was from the seg cleaner at Wakefield. Of course, it could be that my mail is being interfered with; I'd hate to think the poor support is due to prisoners' apathy or fear of involvement.

For years 'The Cages' at Wakefield have witnessed so much torture and abuse, I would have thought people would jump at a chance to expose our abusers.

I have been fighting this cause for 11 years now and have had to suffer the consequences. It has even been suggested by our abusers that this is the manifestation of a personality disorder. Unfortunately I am running out of time to gather evidence as the case is due to be heard soon. I am currently fighting for a change of venue for the hearing. 'They' wanted to hold it at Wakefield prison and transfer me back there, into the hands of my abusers! I'm arguing for a trial in front of a jury. I'll keep you informed of the outcome.

TONY WILSON NW1208
HMP Whitemoor, PE15 0PR

LETTERS

Bombs in Bangladesh

Recently in Bangladesh more than 500 bombs exploded in 64 districts of the country leading to many injuries and deaths. Despite this Bangladesh remains a nation out of the media spotlight. The bombs are likely to have been the work of Islamic extremists seeking to overthrow the government.

Bangladesh achieved its independence in December 1972 from the military junta of Pakistan. Three million people gave their lives for this cause and it became an example of unity, integrity and revolution. Founding President of the country Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, also the leader of the Independence movement, laid foundations for a democratic, secular, nationalist and socialist system. In 1975 Mujibur was assassinated along with his family but the motive behind the *coup d'état* is still mysterious.

After the unfortunate fall of Mujibur's government the socialist

system collapsed and opportunists took control of the country, clearing the way for an extreme Islamist fascist state. After 1975 the country plunged into one military dictatorship after another. Left-wing and progressive movements were crushed and revolutionaries murdered.

In 1992 the first 'democratic' government came into power. Today the power struggle is divided between those who can afford it. Corruption is vividly entwined in the roots of the system. Bangladesh has it all, secret police, communal hatred, extremist groups, starving majority and the rich elite. The structure of the political system is complex and at the same time restricted to the upper class. The left wing parties are without motivation and can hardly distinguish between truth and farce. The parliament is nothing more than a centre for futile arguments and a validation

FRFI BCM Box 5909 London WC1N 3XX e-mail: rcgfrfi@easynet.co.uk
website: www.revolutionarycommunist.com and www.rcgfrfi.easynet.co.uk

for the hierarchy. It is this decaying and parasitic system that has sparked the recent bombings.

On 21 August 2004 a meeting of the main opposition was bombed. More than 20 people lost their lives with more than 300 being severely injured. The miscreants are still at large. But the government simply says 'We are investigating'.

The British High Commissioner was also bombed recently at a shrine in Sylhet. No-one apprehended, no-one brought to justice but the government is confident that they will succeed. However, the majority of the population lacks that confidence.

The ruling class or the political elite is steadily moving towards a more concentrated religious structure. Bangladesh is slipping into communalism, centralised right-wing Islamic governance and intolerance towards minorities. Just like in any other country divided by wealth, control and oppression, Bangladesh's masses are suffering.

KHALID
London

'Smash EDO' Peace Camp

In mid August, the Smash EDO campaign held a week-long peace camp against EDO MBM, an arms company in Brighton who are complicit in the war crimes committed by Britain, the US and Israel. The start of the camp was marked with a march: from the outset, they suffered from attacks on their democratic right to protest by the Sussex and Metropolitan Police, as well as from EDO. The march and camp were supported by anarchists, socialists and communists from Brighton, London and Manchester.

Later in the week a march in the centre of Brighton was quickly stopped under Section 12 of the Public Order Act 1986 and demonstrators were forced up a side street by police. Four protesters were arrested, three of them for 'obstruction of the highway,' even though they complied with the police's requests. The four were later released without charge. The protesters then paid a surprise visit to EDO MBM's second premises in Fishergate. Again the police attempted to clear the camp and threatened to make arrests,

claiming this was at the request of the council, but when contacted a local Green Party councillor informed protesters that no such request had been made and the police were forced to back down. There were also other incidents of police harassment throughout the week of protest.

Smash EDO continues to hold regular noisy demos outside EDO on Wednesdays from 4 till 6 at Home Farm Road, Moulescoomb, Brighton. The fight against British imperialism and against the repression carried out by Sussex Police and EDO MBM must be supported.

ROBERT FROST
Brighton

Justina and Yonre must stay!

Justina Ogbé Eyube and her infant son, Yonre, fled oil-rich Delta State in Nigeria late last year and sought asylum in the UK. They are victims of disputes between different ethnic groups about control of the few perks the oil gives local people. In August 2003 her village was destroyed by an ethnic militia and in November 2003 she learned that her husband had been killed. She believes he was targeted because of his role in work with oil companies and that she is now a target.

They were 'dispersed' to Bury. Over the first six months of this year the asylum system went through the motions of considering her case (without giving her legal

aid) and confirmed its original conclusion that her story is probably true, but she could safely internally relocate somewhere else in Nigeria. Oh, yeah?

The Manchester Delta State community helped the campaign launch in June. The campaign has slowly gathered momentum. Bury Solidarity gave support from the start and through campaigning networks we quickly made contact with Eucharía (see page 3) whose situation is very similar to Justina's. FRFI supporters in Eucharía's campaign helped us with joint leafleting activities. The Sukula family campaign in Bolton helped us with press contacts and Justina and Yonre

have appeared prominently in the *Bury Times*. She met her councillor and local church leaders who have been very supportive. A contact in Delta State is gathering evidence for a possible fresh claim.

Fresh blood at our fortnightly planning meetings always welcome (next one Wednesday 28 September at the address below). We would be delighted to hear from anyone with ideas and expertise relevant to a fresh claim - especially a lawyer.

For more information about the campaign, contact me on 0161 798 8762, by e-mail george@heronbg.info or at the address below.

GEORGE HERON
17 Parksway, Prestwich,
Manchester M25 0JE

SWP opportunists in Ireland

Members of northern Ireland's SWP called for support for the bereaved mother of decorated volunteer GI Casey Sheehan outside Belfast City Hall on Tuesday 30 August. Cindy Sheehan is currently demanding to meet President Bush outside his Texas ranch so he can explain why he lied to send her son off to die in Iraq. A few of the north's professional SWP cadres demonstrated beside a coffin wrapped in an American flag.

There are two particularly remarkable aspects to this display. The first is that it took place in the context of a long hot summer of loyalist violence including at least

five murders, 14 attempted murders, including one of a Catholic schoolboy, 22 bombings, including fire bombings, of Catholic homes and a primary school in Ballymena, in a protracted campaign of ethnic cleansing. During these last months the police, the British government and mainstream unionism have displayed a quite studied indifference. Would the SWP countenance a protest against this most recent, and more than apparent, proliferation of loyalist violence in the north?

The second incongruous aspect of the SWP demonstration was in its partiality. Calling for 'US/UK

troops out of Iraq' is, of course, admirable. But would the north Irish SWP demand that British imperialist troops be removed from Ireland? If not, why not, and what kind of people are the SWP attempting to influence with their somewhat one-sided application of basic socialist principle?

Vocally targeting Bush and Blair as 'war criminals' and calling for 'support' for a grieving American woman whilst ignoring the violent reaction brewing in their own back yard, embodies the kind of opportunistic posturing that has made the SWP so famous amongst students and concerned members of the middle class.

JOHN
Belfast

Message from the Cuban 5

Message to the British people from the Cuban 5 re: London bombings

Dear brothers and sisters,

In this moment of pain and sorrow, we stand by your side and send you all our love, support and solidarity.

We keep on fighting against terrorism (all kinds of terrorism) as our better way to build a much better world for humanity, avoiding that such criminal acts as this one be carried out again.

We must prosecute and bring justice to all terrorists all over the world and create a peaceful and loving world for our children and future generations, as a modest way to honour the lives of innocent human beings who have died.

ANTONIO GUERRERO
#58741-004
USP Florence, PO Box 7500,
5880 State Highway 67,
South Florence, CO 81226, USA

RENE GONZALEZ
#58738-004
FCI Marianna, PO Box 7007
Marianna FL 32447-7007, USA

GERARDO HERNANDEZ
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FERNANDO GONZALEZ
#58733-004
FCI Oxford, PO Box 1000,
Oxford WI 53952-0505 USA

RAMON LABANINO SALAZAR
#58734-004
USP Beaumont, PO Box 26035,
Beaumont, Texas 77720-6035 USA

FRFI finally gets through

Today [5 August] I finally received my copy of the June/July issue of FRFI, after I had filled in a B-Wing application form, and also after I had contacted my solicitor Michael Purdon about it when I received the first envelope empty.

I don't write much since my stroke, and I write lousy now, but could I claim 'stress' for the two-month stressful wait? And, while we are at it, did the idiot who wrongfully got the issue stopped in the first place get the sack for it?

Incidentally, I found nothing objectionable in it at all!

BRUCE CHILDS
HMP Frankland

A number of prisoners at Frankland, Full Sutton and Belmarsh have been stopped from receiving the past two issues of FRFI. We protested about this censorship by writing letters to the prisons involved and to the Prison Service, publicising it in the prison newspaper *Inside Time*, on Indymedia, through activist e-mail lists and elsewhere, and have encouraged prisoners to seek legal redress. We also called on our supporters to protest to the Directorate of High Security prisons. All three prisons have since been instructed to allow prisoners to receive FRFI without further hindrance. We will continue to oppose all attempts to censor our newspaper or prevent its distribution in prisons.

Asylum seekers on hunger strike

In July, Ugandan asylum seekers held at Yarl's Wood Removal Centre started a hunger strike in protest at their proposed deportation to Uganda as well as the conditions at Yarl's Wood.

The women had been raped and tortured in Uganda, following their activities against the Ugandan government. Harriet Anyangokolo was on hunger strike for over 22 days and due to be deported on 14 August. Her case was highlighted in the press and on the radio through the work of Women Against Rape (WAR) and the Crossroads Women's Centre. She was given a reprieve after an application for judicial review was lodged with the high court. Harriet was held in isolation prior to her release. As of mid-September, there were still four Ugandan women on hunger strike, increasingly weak and ill.

Harriet Anyangokolo bravely spoke out, not only about the horrific abuse she suffered in Uganda, but also about the sexual harassment and intimidation meted out by the guards at Yarl's Wood against her and other women. Since her public statement, WAR has received many similar statements from women held in other detention centres around Britain.

It is appalling that deportations back to unsafe countries continue, and that vulnerable female asylum seekers regularly face abuse while in detention by unaccountable guards in privately run centres in Britain. However, as Harriet Anyangokolo's case shows, taking action, organising and speaking out can achieve victories.

MEGAN LANE
North London

Consistency

The latest FRFI is very good. I found Charles Chinweizu's piece on the G8 very informative. However, can we have some consistency when it comes to financial statistics? Some are in \$ and some in £; could we have either all one or the other. This would save a lot of confusion and would make these sometimes complicated articles a lot easier to read. Keep up the good work.

JON KEMPSTER
London

Erratum

The first paragraph of 'Poor care for nothing' (FRFI 186, Letters) refers to 'areas of Britain with above average levels of deprivation and long-term illness'. This should read 'areas of England and Wales...' as the statistics and figures in the *Population Trends* from the Office for National Statistics refer to England and Wales only. However, figures for the health discrepancies between rich and poor in Scotland are similarly appalling. HC

Gaza withdrawal Zionists expand West Bank settlement

On 22 and 23 August the final colonial-settlers were evacuated from the Gaza Strip. The Israeli withdrawal from 21 colonial settlements in Gaza (and four in the West Bank) had reportedly been completed two weeks ahead of the time allocated by the Israeli army for the task. Settler opposition to the withdrawal had in reality been very limited with the threats to mobilise 100,000 in the Gaza shown to have no real substance. The confrontations between the settlers and the Israeli troops and police, in stark contrast to the brutality meted out to Palestinian protestors, were stage-managed to allow the settlers to make symbolic acts of opposition to the pull-out, knowing that they would be treated with kid gloves by the security forces.

BOB SHEPHERD reports.

The true fascist nature of the colonial-settler opposition was shown in the weeks preceding the evacuation. At the beginning of August an Israeli soldier, who had deserted in protest, got on a bus in the predominantly Arab town of Shfaram in northern Israel and opened fire, killing four Arab passengers. On 17 August an Israeli settler opened fire on Palestinian workers in Shiloh, an industrial area near Ramallah in the West Bank, killing four more Palestinians. He said he had done it to stop the withdrawal.

On 24 August, immediately after the pull-out was complete, to show that it was business as usual, an Israeli undercover squad pulled up in a car outside a café in Tulkarm on the West Bank, opened fire and killed five defenceless Palestinians sitting outside. The Palestinian response was quick with a suicide attack on Beer Sheba wounding over 50. Mahmoud Abbas, leader of the Palestinian Authority (PA), immediately condemned the attack as a 'terrorist raid' but all the resistance groups were united in describing it as a 'natural' response to the Israeli crimes of the previous weeks which had in all resulted in the deaths of 13 Palestinians.

The killing of Palestinians has continued in Gaza since the evacuation. On 6 September, five Palestinians were killed in an explosion in Gaza City. The PA immediately claimed that the deaths had been caused by the premature explosion of a Hamas bomb. Hamas strongly denied this, pointing out that Israeli helicopters were flying directly over the area when the explosion occurred. On 7 September one young Palestinian was killed and three wounded when an Israeli tank opened fire on youngsters protesting over the continued presence of Israeli troops near Khan Younis. On 9 September another young Palestinian was killed by Israeli troops, this time in Rafah.

On 12 September the Israeli army followed the settlers out of Gaza. Before leaving they completed the demolition of the settlements, leaving intact public buildings for the use of the PA. They also, against the agreement reached with the PA, left intact the synagogues in the settlements. This was clearly a crude attempt to be able to label the PA 'anti-semitic' when they began the demolition of the

synagogue buildings.

The Gaza withdrawal is only an evacuation of the colonial-settlers. Israel will continue to control all of Gaza's borders, its airspace and territorial waters. Israel closed down the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt, with Egypt's agreement, as their forces withdrew. The plan was for it to be closed for six months during which time it would be 'upgraded' with the introduction of security cameras and surveillance equipment. The response of the local people was to ignore the closure and stream across the border to meet family and friends, some of whom they had not seen for over ten years. Hamas and the Popular Resistance Committees helped them by blasting holes in the border walls to allow free passage.

Israel will build a new border crossing at Kerem Shalom, a point where Gaza, Egypt and Israel all meet; this will be the point where all goods pass in and out of Gaza. The new border crossing point will allow Israel to keep control of all imports/exports into Gaza and also potentially all customs taxes. The Rafah border point will remain for pedestrians crossing between Gaza and Egypt. Israel has insisted that it be monitored by a third party, which is expected to be Britain. This will be ironic since it was British imperialism in the early twentieth century that drew the border between Gaza and Egypt artificially splitting the town of Rafah into two.

The questions of the reopening of the international airport in Gaza and the building of a new seaport have not been resolved but it is clear that, even if the PA are given the go-ahead, Israel will not allow the Palestinians full control over them. The Zionists are still preventing the basic right of free passage between Gaza and the West Bank.



Settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem

The dismantling of the 25 settlements, with a total population of 8,475, still leaves approximately 142 settlements in the West Bank with over 436,000 inhabitants. The majority of the evacuated colonial-settlers will in all probability relocate to the West Bank. In the past 12 months 12,800 settlers have moved into the West Bank, 50% more than those evacuated in the summer.

Following the withdrawal, the Israeli government announced plans



Palestinian demonstration against the Apartheid Wall

to annex Ma'ale Adumim and the other large settlement blocks around East Jerusalem. Sharon declared 'There will be building in the settlement blocks...each government since 1967, right, left and national unity has seen strategic importance in specific areas. I will build'. He also declared that the Ariel settlement block in the heart of the West Bank would be annexed, as it was 'a part of Israel forever'.

The apartheid separation wall around Ma'ale Adumim will stretch 14km deep into the West Bank. The Zionists plan to add 25,000 settlers to Ma'ale Adumim's existing population of 30,000. This will:

- isolate East Jerusalem from the West Bank by encircling the city with settlements and the Wall;
- put an end to its territorial continuity with the West Bank;
- tip the demographic balance of Jerusalem in favour of Israel by creating a Jewish majority and undermining the Palestinian position in any 'final status' talks on the future of East Jerusalem;
- virtually split the West Bank into two.

The route of the Apartheid Wall in the West Bank is clearly seen by Sharon and his pragmatist Zionist allies as Israel's *de facto* eastern border and the settlement blocks will expand to fill the space between the Green Line and the Wall to create 'facts on the ground'. It is calculated that the Apartheid Wall when complete, including its route in the Jordan Valley, will annex 46% of all the West Bank. The southern section of the Wall in the Hebron area will be completed by the end of this year.

Shoot-to-kill

At the beginning of September, *The Guardian* published accounts of the Israeli 'shoot-to-kill' policies in the occupied Palestinian territories drawn from the accounts of a group of ex-Israeli soldiers, *Breaking the Silence*: 'Standing orders in some parts of the Palestinian territories is to open fire on people regardless of whether they were armed or not, or posed any physical threat'. One soldier said he was 'ordered to shoot anyone who appeared on a roof or a balcony, anyone who appeared to be kneeling on the

Role of the Palestinian Authority

On 24 August the US granted over \$50m of aid to the PA for reconstruction work in Gaza. One of the PA's first acts has been to increase the pay of its security forces. The probability is that a large part of this money will be siphoned off by corrupt elements in the PA. The assassination of Mousa

Arafat on 7 September was a violent example of the infighting between sections of the PA, the cause of which is rivalry over control of the 'aid' bonanza. The Popular Resistance Committees which had at first been accused of the killing of Arafat issued a statement on 10 September which clearly laid the blame for his death on Mohammed Dahlan, PA Civil Affairs Minister. 'Results of internal investigation among our ranks showed that Dahlan...was the mastermind of the crime and gave the go-ahead signal to execute it'.

On 6 September there were violent clashes between PA security forces and unemployed demonstrators in Gaza City. Hamas called for restraint on both sides but said the demonstration was the natural result of the 'abject poverty, deprivation and discriminatory conditions these workers were experiencing'. The PA is directly responsible for some of this: at the end of May it stopped monthly pensions of \$150 to many families of Palestinian dead.

Imperialism is again putting pressure on the PA to confront and disarm the Resistance. Abbas is reported to have demanded that all Resistance groups should disarm after the elections next January. However Hamas has shown the support it has by staging massive rallies in Gaza since the withdrawal. Local leader Mahmoud al-Zahar told one on 13 September in Gaza City that 'our weapons will remain in our hands until the Palestinian flag is hoisted in Jerusalem... these weapons will remain with us so we can defend our land and our children until the liberation is complete'.

ground or anyone who appeared on the street at designated times! One former soldier known as Assaf, a member of an armoured unit that entered the Gaza town of Dir al Balah in the summer of 2002, was told: 'Every person you see on the street, kill him'. Moshe, operating near Jenin in the West Bank May 2003, said 'We were expressly told that we were just waiting for someone to climb on an APC, and ordered to shoot to kill...after a day or two a 12 year old climbed on one...one of our sharpshooters killed him'. They killed Diya Gawadreh, who was 13 years old.

Tom Hurndall

At the beginning of August Sergeant Taysir Hayb of the Israeli army was sentenced to eight years in prison for the manslaughter of Manchester student Tom Hurndall. Hayb had shot Tom in the head as he attempted to lead Palestinian children to safety from Israeli gunfire in Rafah in early April 2003. Immediately afterwards the Israeli army claimed that he had been armed and was wearing a balaclava. That this was eventually proved to be a pack of lies was due

to the tenacious campaign waged by Tom's family.

Since the start of the Intifada in September 2000 only 131 cases of misuse of firearms have been investigated, there have been only 12 trials and seven convictions. None of the killers of Palestinian youth ever end up in prison. The Director of Amnesty International commented, 'Taysir Hayb's conviction and sentence stand in stark contrast to the blanket impunity that shields virtually all of Israel's security forces from effective investigation and punishment'.